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September 13, 2004 No. 2748 $1.60

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A grievous loss, an unexpected letter, and a family found ... p.14

59th year of publication

Darfur declared "worst humanitarian crisis" by UN

Harry der Nederlanden

Despite pressures exerted on the Sudan by the US, the UN and other international bodies, killing and rape continue in the western province of Darfur and in the refugee camps.

The Sudanese military government in Khartoum was given an *ultimatum July 30* to stop the raids against the people of Darfur by the end of August or face sanctions. Recent reports from aid workers and observers placed in the area by the African Union say the security situation has improved but killings continue. Women in the camps, which are largely made up of women and children, are being raped by soldiers whenever they venture into the bush for firewood, which they need to do. The men who remain are afraid to accompany the women, for they have seen hundreds of their fellows killed when they dared to do so. Even aid workers are afraid to accompany the women.

Sudan women line up for food

Khartoum continues to deny and delay, insisting that it has matters under control and that it is safe for the people to return; in fact, it is pressuring them to return to the burned villages where many of their men have been murdered.

The UN said Khartoum was sending more men to police the camps, but people in the camps put little confidence in the protection offered by the very government that has been harrying them to death. As many as 50,000 have already been killed by local Arab militia known as Janjawid.

UN Special Rapporteur Asma Jahangir, in a report based on a 13-day visit to the region in June, said there was "overwhelming evidence" that the killing was carried out "in a coordinated manner by the armed forces of the government and government-backed militias."

She said the most often heard report was of villages being surrounded by military vehicles accompanied by Arab militia riding horses. The local population was plundered, looted, tortured, raped and often shot at in a random manner; however, adult men seemed often to be specifically targeted. Before leaving, the Arab militia would burn down the villages. In some cases, helicopters or Antonov airplanes were used to bomb or attack the villages or to provide cover for ground operations, including operations carried out by Arab militia.

Darfur, an area slightly smaller than Newfoundland composed mostly of dry grasslands and desert, is populated by black peoples who live in small villages along the few rivers. There are few roads, and many of them become impassable in the rainy season, which is just beginning. A map of the area marking every destroyed village with a small flame looks as if prairie fires have swept across the coun-try. The symbols tell nothing however of the suffering of the almost two million people who have been driven from their homes and now huddle together along the border of Chad, with little or no resources except those passed out by relief agencies. Many of the surviving men have joined rebel groups to fight Khartoum and the Janjawid.

The law of the Kalashnikov

Some fighting between the black village people of Darfur and the Arab nomads, both Muslim, has been going on for about 20 years, although in some areas they mingled and lived together in peace. Resistance increased recently because the people saw that Khartoum was allowing the Arab militias to operate with impunity and was giving them weapons and support. The peace deal worked out with the non-Muslim people of the south also spurred the men of Darfur into action, as they felt that their plight was being ignored. Last year two rebel groups operating in the area escalated their attacks. In response, Khartoum rapidly escalated its support to the mounted Arab militias.

Many have described the situation as genocide in slow motion. One analyst says it is actually southern Sudan speeded up. Khartoum fought skirmishes in the south for over 20 years. This time it sought to suppress the rebels by moving swiftly. Nearly 1.5 million of the people of Darfur have been displaced, according to

See **Sudan** *cont. on p. 3...*

China tightens control over Christians

Xu Mei

NANJING, China (Compass) – A serious situation regarding religious liberty has been quietly developing in China. Many had hoped that the Communist Party's religious policy – and especially its attitude towards the Christian church – would liberalize in the run-up to the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

But there is now clear evidence of a crackdown on "illegal religious activities," especially unregistered Christian group activities, as well as a tightening of controls on academic and media activities related to religion. Even registered

See **China** *cont on p. 2...*

Chinese house church

News

church leaders sympathetic to the house churches have been reined in, and projects of the state-controlled Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) involving foreigners have been put on hold.

After a series of government meetings at the highest levels, leaders called for tightened control of religion. Late last year, party leaders reportedly expanded the office which was set up to suppress the Falun Gong cult, so that it could deal with other unauthorized religious groups as well, which they label, sometimes very arbitrarily, as "cults."

The book *Jesus in Beijing* has been translated and circulated widely to Chinese officials as evidence of "religious infiltration." Published in the United States by former *Time* magazine correspondent David Aikman, the book openly speculates that China could become a Christian country because of the rapid expansion of the church, especially the illegal house churches.

Political Threat?

Reliable sources in China report that this book, along with the DVD *The Cross* by political-dissident-turned-Christian-evangelist Yuan Zhiming, also now living in the United States, rattled the Communist Party leadership.

Both the book and DVD supply information about the house churches which would be regarded as quite innocuous overseas, but a few political references and images have made both works highly sensitive within China.

In the first week of June, an important meeting of all provincial leaders was reportedly held in Beijing. The main theme was the importance of maintaining control of religious affairs in order to ensure the continuance of the monopoly on power of the ruling Chinese Communist Party.

At the meeting, provincial governors were ordered to report directly to Beijing on the state of religion in their provinces, a rare development showing that at the very highest levels in Beijing religion – and particularly Christianity – is perceived as a threat to political stability.

As a result, leaders have planned yet another campaign to promote atheism. They will tighten censorship over Internet sites and the publication of religious books. Funding and student recruitment for various university centers for the study of religion will be frozen.

At the end of July, detailed national regulations were approved to guide the administration of all religious affairs in China. This followed more than two years' debate on various drafts by the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), as the former Religious Affairs Bureau is now known.

These measures may be foreshadowed in Shanghai. Its new regulations focus on monitoring the religious activities of foreign residents and on the use of the Internet by religious groups.

The head of SARA, Ye Xiaowen, who has been uncritically welcomed in North America, seems to have taken a leading role in alarming the government, possibly to extend funding for his department which was slated to be scaled down in 2003.

Leaders of the state-controlled church have played a dutiful role as well in the campaign. For example, a book attacking the Christian missionary movement for being a "tool of imperialism" to "invade China" in the 19th century was published recently to loud praise within official church circles.

As usual, officials of the state church (TSPM) have also downplayed the growth of Christianity in China to shore up their claim to represent the whole Chinese church. TSPM leaders visiting Hong Kong for a Bible exhibition in early August said the estimate of 80 million Protestants in China, a number propagated by international advocacy groups, was "outrageous." Rev. Deng Fucun, vice chairman of the TSPM, told reporters from *Japan Today*, "Of course I would like to say there are 80 million believers in China, but in fact there are just 16 million."

Officials at the exhibition also insisted that Bibles were freely available in China. However, in August, Compass obtained a letter from a Chinese resident which spoke of meeting a rural Christian recently imprisoned for owning a Bible. The prison guards broke all 10 of his fingers to ensure that he could "never hold a Bible again."

Arrests

The new policies have resulted in a wave of arrests in recent months. Over 100 leaders of the China Gospel Fellowship were arrested on June 11 in Wuhan city, Hubei province, although most were released a few days later.

The next day, another 100 house church Christians were arrested in remote Xinjiang province during a meeting organized by a large house church network. Most have since been released, but a key leader of the has been imprisoned.

Another 40 house church leaders were arrested on July 17 at a training seminar in Cheng Du, Sichuan province and on August 6, approximately 100 house church Christians meeting for a summer retreat near Kaifeng, Henan province, were arrested. Those from outside Henan were sent back to their home provinces, where some have been sentenced or placed under strict surveillance.

Sentenced for revealing state secrets

After 10 months in detention, a verdict was also issued on August 6 for three Chinese Christians accused of revealing "state secrets." Sentences ranged from one to three years for "illegally soliciting and providing national intelligence to overseas organizations."

The three men were accused of leaking information about the case of another Chinese Christian to the foreign magazine *Christian Life Quarterly* in 2000, and sending other information about persecution to Christians overseas.

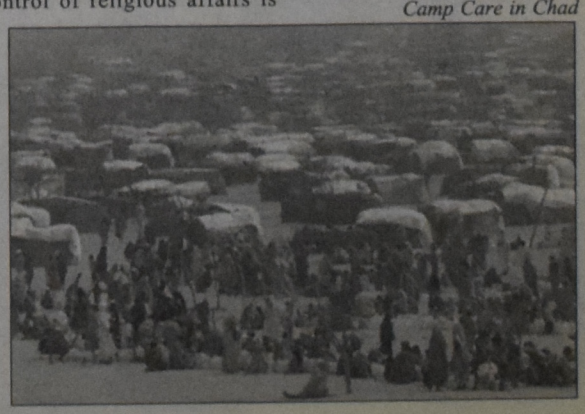
In perhaps the most surprising incident, Pastor Lin Xiangao, more commonly known as Pastor Samuel Lamb, was taken to police headquarters on June 13, for the first time in 14 years.

Due to his high international profile, Pastor Lamb is normally left to run his church without interference. His brief interrogation may be yet another warning signal from Chinese officials.

Taken together, these events reveal a serious chill in the atmosphere in China so far as the control of religious affairs is concerned. It is alarming that policies are again being implemented which hark back to the Maoist approach of the 1950s and 60s. Educated Chinese intellectuals – even those who are not religious believers themselves – have been quietly laughing at the "leftist" attitudes of some leaders in SARA and the TSPM for years.

However, the wave of recent arrests shows that this is no longer a laughing matter. Some observers believe China is headed back down a dead-end road unsuited to its diverse cultural and religious landscape, and entirely at odds with its responsibility as a member of the United Nations Security Council to propagate freedom of religion and belief within her borders.

Camp Care in Chad



One Chinese "house church" exposed as a cult

Xu Mei

NANJING, China (Compass) — Mr. Xu Shuangfu, leader of the controversial Three Grades of Servant (TGS) movement in China, was arrested along with 90 other co-workers and followers in April 2004. Some overseas reports immediately tagged the TGS movement as an orthodox Christian house church network, suffering persecution from Communist authorities. However, the evidence emerging since the arrest suggests otherwise.

The TGS was founded in the late 1980s in the largely rural province of Anhui. By the year 2000, it claimed a nationwide membership of over one million followers, with large numbers of disciples in Anhui, Sichuan and northeast China.

Xu Shuangfu, the founder, is in his sixties, although with his long beard he looks considerably older. He is also known as Xu Sheng-guang, a name which means "holy light." The long hair and beard are more akin to traditional Taoist ideas of a divine sage than to Christianity.

Sources say Xu travels from place to place in the utmost secrecy. Wherever he stays overnight becomes a "Holy of Holies," forbidden to ordinary sect-members. TGS evangelists sleep in "the Holy Place," while ordinary believers hold their meetings in the so-called "Outer Court."

Through these arrangements, Xu clearly claims divine status. The God of Israel in the Old Testament allowed only the high priest to approach him (though only once a year) in the innermost sanctuary of the Jewish temple.

The cult also claims to be the only true church. According to Xu's teachings, salvation can be gained only through membership in the TGS.

Xu uses Jesus' parable of the talents in Matthew chapter 25 as the basis for the church to be divided into "three grades of servants." Those in the highest grade are known as apostles. Xu has appointed himself as the "Great Servant," and disobeying his commands is seen as disobedience to God himself.

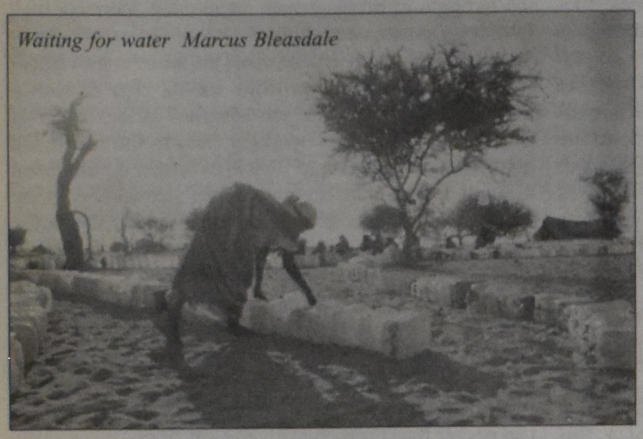
Xu also claims absolute power as the only mediator between God and man. Believers are told not to confess their sins to God directly, but to Xu, thereby replacing Jesus Christ with a human deity.

TGS has a ruthless system of control over its followers. According to sources, those who disobey Xu are beaten and those who dare to leave the cult may risk death. Xu and his sister have amassed much wealth from their followers through this tight system of control and allegiance.

There is no doubt that the Chinese government has on occasion wrongly labeled certain house-church movements as dangerous sects or cults. But there is also no doubt that such cults do exist in China.

TGS seems to be a case in point; both the unofficial house churches and the official Three Self Church in China have condemned the movement as a cult.

News / Politics



Waiting for water Marcus Bleasdale

some estimates.

According to an article in the *New York Review of Books* by John Ryle, the present government, which seized power in 1989, has sought to maintain power by a strategy that plays different population groups off against each other. After inciting conflict in Darfur and arming the Arabs, Ryle speculates, Khartoum may not actually exercise a lot of control over them. Large areas of Sudan have in effect become ungovernable, ruled by armed bands. He quotes a current saying also familiar in other parts of Africa: "You're trash without a Kalashnikov; get some cash with a Kalshnikov." The Russian-made Kalashnikov is the weapon of choice for so-called rebels, militias and warlords all over Africa.

Writes, Lee Smith, another expert on the Arab world: "Khartoum argues that it's not a genocide, just a land dispute, and the real culprits aren't the Janjawid but the Darfur rebels, African Muslims who are trying to settle scores with the government by killing its Arab Muslim sympathizers. It's true that the rebels have contributed to the death toll, and the fact that the press has largely overlooked their culpability only feeds the [government's] paranoid fears that an ascendant West is looking for a pretext to further expand its reach into the Muslim world."

Ryle suggests that Khartoum's ruthless response to Darfur is a sign of fear that if they don't clamp down here, other insurgencies will arise elsewhere in the country, which is riddled with conflicting groups. According to a Sudanese scholar, the conflict in Darfur may be a spin-off from a conflict in Khartoum between two factions of the Islamists. The brains behind the government's policy of Islamisation, Hassan al-Turabi, was jailed at the beginning of this year, and he was the one responsible for playing off the Arabs of the north against the non-Arabs of the south in the conflict that recently ended.

Darfur mother and child

The African Union as peacemaker

A new round of peace talks was hosted by the African Union with the participation of leaders from the Arab league. Although Sudan signed an agreement with the UN, reports continued to come in of further raids and even bombings. The Nigerian government declared itself ready to send in 1,500 troops to police the affected region. Some 80 AU monitors are already on the ground to supervise the peace and 155 troops from Rwanda were sent to protect them. Khartoum, however, has been adamant that no foreign troops, especially from Western nations, would be permitted on its territory. But at this writing it had not rejected the AU/Nigeria proposal outright.

Humanitarian agencies estimate that over 2 million people in Darfur are in need of food and other aid. The Sudanese government recently removed obstacles to allow trucks and planes to move into the area; however, with the beginning of the rainy season, transporting large amounts of food has become very difficult. Transport planes have to be used, but there are very few places for them to land. Dropping food from the air is also much more expensive and risky.

The UN has called Darfur the worst humanitarian crisis in the world at present and urged its members to provide increased aid. The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee is one of many relief organizations raising funds to help in the effort to save many thousands of lives in Sudan.

Electing a president: too much democracy?

Principalities & Powers
David T. Koyzis

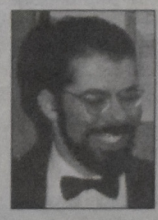
In the 1986 mid-term elections in the US, something occurred in my home state of Illinois illustrating the dangers of excessively democratizing a political system. In the primary election in March of that year two followers of extremist Lyndon LaRouche, an anti-semite who believes, among other things, that the Queen is the head of an international drug-smuggling ring, won the Democratic nominations for Lieutenant Governor and Secretary of State. Were Illinoisans in an especially nettlesome mood that year, ready to throw their support behind a fanatical political agenda? Not at all.

US ballots are exceedingly lengthy and, to vote intelligently, Americans must educate themselves concerning scores of individual candidates. Party labels mean little, particularly at the primary election stage, when voters are responsible for narrowing the choice among possibly four or five candidates for each post. Given the difficulty in learning enough about each candidate, it is clear that many voters opt for those whose *names* sound safe, even if they know nothing else about them. In Illinois that year Democratic voters chose "LaRouchies" Mark Fairchild and Janice Hart over state senator George Sangmeister and Chicago alderman Aurelia Pucinski for their respective posts. The reassuring sound of Fairchild's and Hart's surnames gave them an advantage over the more obviously ethnic names of their opponents. Democratic Party leaders were appalled, but they were stuck with these two candidates, because the voters had spoken.

As a result of reforms instituted in the late 1960s and early '70s, voters were empowered at the expense of party officials, ostensibly to break the control of the old urban bosses, such as Chicago's late mayor Richard J. Daley. All of this sounded good at the time, and it was difficult to argue with something that would more thoroughly democratize the political process. However, the major effect of these reforms was to eliminate a valuable preliminary filtering mechanism that would ensure that a party's candidates were qualified for their posts and stood within the mainstream of its political commitments. Often ill-informed voters were in effect being asked to make executive decisions better made by a smaller body.

It is no accident that, since the Democratic and Republican Parties made primary election results binding, Americans have chosen a series of presidents with little or no national or international experience. They have typically been governors of states who have won election by campaigning *against* Washington rather than for it. Once they have attained to the presidency, they have often been less than adept at co-operating with members of Congress and foreign leaders. Jimmy Carter was the first of these, his presi-dency marred by a series of unskilfully-handled foreign and domestic debacles climaxing with the Iran hostage crisis of 1979-81. George W. Bush is the most recent, pursuing foreign and defence policies that have unnecessarily alienated US allies while failing to apprehend the principal mastermind behind the 9/11 attacks.

Given that the United States is a superpower, whose every action on the international stage has global ramifications, the rest of the world has an interest in the process whereby a president comes to office. If it is not true after all that more democracy will cure the ills of democracy, and if excessive democratization puts relative neophytes into what is arguably the most powerful office in the world, then the two major parties badly need to revisit the process whereby they nominate a presidential candidate, leaving it to the voters to make only the final and not the initial decision.



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Editorial

"Your kingdom come...."

Harry der Nederlanden

Last issue I used this space to direct some strong criticisms at the direction given to the churches by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches at its meeting in Accra. Although I stand by that criticism, it would be a grave error for us to therefore ignore the issues raised by that body. (You can read another view of the Alliance's message on page 9 of this issue from the new president of WARC.)

Christians, especiallys in the powerful and wealthy North, must be more aware of conditions not only in their own society but of other nations, especially weaker and poorer ones. We are today more than ever part of a global network, and what happens on one side of the world impacts people living on the other side. In many ways, the WARC report "Covenanting for justice" is a good corrective to a spirituality narrowed down to personal faith, piety and evangelism. It emphasizes that in his work of reconciliation God-in-Christ is not just concerned for the souls of individuals and their ultimate destination but also for the whole person in his social, economic and political relations.

Just listing all the ills people experience in this global economy would easily fill this page, for everything is connected on some level. Global warming, air and water pollution, decay of the ozone layer, employment and poverty, ownership and use of resources, access to healthcare and education, the increasing gap between rich and poor, competition for energy sources like oil and water power, etc are so interrelated that there's a book published every month that traces them all to a single cause.

Canadians used to say: "When the US sneezes, Canada catches a cold." The same is true tenfold for the poor nations of the world: When the rich North sneezes, entire populations are mowed down like grass. Most of us are still accustomed to think in another mode, one that thinks in terms of connectedness as well. The development of resources and industry, even of products made for the well-to-do, we assume, means an increase in the general wealth. It means jobs for working people, either at home or abroad. Private initiative, invested capital, and the mobilization of human know-how provided by corporations in the long run combine to benefit the whole of society.

Some will always be richer than others, it is true, but that's just the way the world is. Inequality as such is not necessarily evil. Some socio-political arrangements are more successful than others not just in providing freedom and justice but also in producing more wealth. Those of us in the Calvinist tradition even used to see our greater affluence as the by-product of a more biblically responsible attitude to creation, work and the enjoyment of the good things of this earth.

The model of connectedness that dominates the thinking of the WARC document and of most environmentalists today is that of a finite earth with limited resources. If I drive around in a gas-guzzling SUV, this uses up a limited resource – oil – that someone else won't be able to use, and it poisons the atmosphere as well. If I buy coffee, and as a responsible consumer shop for the best price, I am exploiting some poor worker in South America or Africa, and perhaps causing land to be used to support my caffeine habit instead of growing mangoes for the local market. The poor mother in the North buying cheap sneakers for her children at Wal-Mart is collaborating in the exploitation of child labor in Thailand.

From the perspective of this model, pretty well every transaction we perform is tainted with guilt, for it deprives someone else, and usually there is someone out there who needs it worse than we do.

From this perspective, Bush's counsel, shortly after the 9/11 terrorist immolation of the workers in the Twin Towers, to go back to doing what we were doing before, namely, shopping and being consumers, was perverse, perhaps demonic. The Twin Towers in this view are in fact symbols and actual tools of an evil empire that serves to steal the resources of the poor and exploit their labor, and Osama bin Laden's assault on them merely gave expression to the rage of the oppressed peoples of the world against the powers that hold them in bondage. To respond, then, by saying, "Get back to your shopping, folks," is like saying, "Ignore the cries of the slaves starving in the basement and go on with your feasting. We'll feed them the scraps from our table after we're done."

The delegates to the WARC assembly were taken for an outing to a large fortress on one of the islands off the coast of Ghana. It once served as a shipping depot for the slave trade. The delegates were asked to imagine Reformed Christians eating and worshiping in the grand rooms above while slaves languished in the dungeons below, waiting to be shipped to America.

It's a graphic picture of the global economy today, WARC implies, except that the entire Southern hemisphere has been turned into slave quarters for the wealthy consumers in the North.

What's wrong with that picture? I think that, although it is a horrifying picture, it is one that we should remember. Economic relations, like employer-worker relations and even like husband-wife relations, always have the potential of devolving into relationships of domination and exploitation, more so when one side has greater power and wealth. The relationships between individuals and races and nations are deeply infected by sin, whether on the economic or political level. And fighting against sin, the world and the devil involves us in the struggle to bring greater justice and "conviviality" into those structural relations.

The WARC document borrows the term "conviviality" from the great critic Ivan Illich and its view of North-South relations from the neo-Marxists of the 70's. Not finding a revolutionary working class in the North, the neo-Marxists "discovered" that in its further development Capitalism had in effect bought over the workers in the North and turned them into consumers and turned entire populations in the developing world into the exploited, oppressed proletariat. Yet, the origins of these ideas should not cause us to dismiss the images they show us. The pictures may be taken with a black-and-white camera that does not register the rich colors of reality, but they do show us something of the truth.

In fact, they may tell us more about the situation of real people than the picture given us by liberal economics, namely, that we can shop and consume with only our own desires in mind because the god of the market will make it all work out to the greater benefit of us all. Nor can we go forward in the faith that in the long run corporations will do what is best because good behavior is rewarded by the market, while bad business is weeded out. And it is becoming increasingly more difficult to believe that wealth has a way of trickling down to the bottom.

Nevertheless, to trash the model of traditional economics entirely would be a grave mistake. The operations of the "free market" are more complex than any mind or agency can possibly encompass. This means that we do have to invest a certain degree of trust in the institutions and corporations that operate across national boundaries to produce and trade all sorts of goods and services from one part of the globe to another. There is no transcendent super-agency that can coordinate all these processes so that they serve the ends of justice and equality as the WARC envisions.

Although the WARC ideal speaks of local control, in order to counterbalance the monolithic empire that it conjures up, with Capitalism or Globalization playing the role of anti-Christ, it implicitly demands an equally powerful and all-competent agent to make straight what now is crooked. Moreover, the church is saddled with the primary biblical mandate to reform "the world economic order into a just structure...."

Doesn't this commit us to becoming kingdom-builders in a way that the WARC has condemned, for example, in the Bush administration? But, of course, we Christians would never resort to force to create the egalitarian, sharing order that is proper to the Kingdom of God, would we? Aren't we forgetting that saintly people are seldom the ones in charge, not in the corporations that bestride this world like a colossus – not even in the UN.

I'm tempted to say, "especially not in the UN," but then you would take me for a cynic.

We can and must join with WARC to confess that "God calls us, as individuals and the church, to confess and repent of the ways in which we have been and continue to be unfaithful and disobedient to God's covenant. For God's vision is for the earth to live in conviviality and security."

But I part ways at the assertion that this happens because of our embeddedness in "the current system." No matter what system we humans are embedded in or create, there will be injustice and sin that we must confess and combat each and every day and in every way, praying all the while, "Your kingdom come."

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Letters

Church geometry: from boxes to triangles

One of the more interesting ideas that came into vogue in the recent past is the idea of thinking outside the box. During my long career as a teacher (upper elementary grades, primarily science), I tried to encourage students to do exactly that: encouraging young minds to use their innate capacities to wonder and to explore, to formulate and to evaluate what they observe around them.

This summer I saw a sign that speaks to this in reverse. It said, "We tried to child-proof our home, but they keep getting in." For some reason, we like to keep things in boxes. When we can tuck something or some idea away in a box; when we can put a label on it, we think we know something about it and something about how it works.

Naming and boxing

I remember leading a group of adult science teachers in a workshop where this phenomenon was acutely evident. I had distributed to each group of participants some white or nearly-white powders. I asked them to list their characteristics, both physical and chemical. The only thing that was off limits was taste. I specifically asked the teachers to *not* try to identify or name the materials, only to list their characteristics.

The groups set to work and followed directions quite well except that the desire to name what they were working with was readily apparent. At this point I should probably tell you what the white powders were: sugar, salt, baking soda, flour, plaster of Paris, and powdered milk. The groups eventually had listed most of the characteristics and actually had named everything except the milk.

Suddenly one person exclaimed loudly, "It's milk!" It was as if a switch had been thrown. All investigation immediately stopped. No more characteristics were listed; no more observations made. Once the elusive powder had been identified, they "knew" all about it. It had been successfully put in a box.

Putting things in boxes or labeling them seems to be inherent to our very nature. By giving something a label, we think we know something about it. We all think we have really understood something when we call it an instinct. The mysteries of bird or salmon migration are not really explained when we identify them as an instinct. But we "feel" better for having done so.

Maybe this desire goes back to the Garden of Eden when Adam was told to name the animals. "Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field." (Genesis 2:19, 20) That worked fine until Linnaeus came along and redid it.

Your box is too small

Arie C. Leder's two-part series, "What's on our (your) mind?" which appeared in *Christian Courier* (August 16 and 30, 2004) is another attempt to put church ideas neatly into boxes. Just why he wants to do this (or why the gentlemen he quotes: Henry Stob, Henry Zwaanstra, James Bratt, and Cornelis Venema do either) is somewhat baffling, but they go at it enthusiastically.

Parenthetically, I have to stick in here that I love to categorize things, ideas, and people as well. I have always loved doing it. That the things, ideas, and people won't stay in the boxes I've designed for them has created problems for me. But as I've gotten older, I've discovered that my boxes had walls that were way too rigid. Reality demanded boxes with flexible walls because there was always leakage in one direction or the other. Way back in my college days I remember a book by Chad Walsh called, *Your God Is Too Small*. My "book" should be called, *Your Box Is Too Inflexible.*

Leder talks about discernable "minds" in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. He says that by the end of the twentieth century, it was possible to identify three such minds: the Transformationalist, the Doctrinalist, and the Pietist. Those are the terms Leder used in his article.

For my purposes, I have chosen to rename them somewhat. I call them not minds, but emphases. The three emphases can be defined as confessional, evangelical, and transformational. Let me briefly define each as I understand them. Confessional: holding to the historic reformed creeds developed in the 1500's (Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and Canons of Dort or the Westminster standards). Evangelical: stresses a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and the need for an individual conversion experience. Transformational: relates Christ to culture and sees the church as being a change agent in providing a biblical social justice model in society.

These three emphases are always in a dynamic tension. There is no one emphasis that can be found throughout the denomination and this has had its impact. Which of the emphases is dominant at any given point in time depends on many factors. In the CRCNA, the tension between the emphases depended on the immigration patterns that existed in any given historical period and the fact that the CRCNA is a binational church. Historically there were several waves of immigration of those of reformed persuasion to North America from the Netherlands in the 1860's and 1880's (primarily to the United States) and post-World War 2 (primarily to Canada). This does not take into account the immigration of earlier reformed people from the Netherlands who came to the New Netherlands colony in the 1600's and whose descendants are known as the Reformed Church in America.

It's my contention that while holding to the same historic confessions, the practical outworking of those confessions differs in the two countries. An analysis of the church seems to indicate that there is a dynamic tension between three main emphases. Depending on which emphasis was foremost when various church ministries were established and what emphasis is currently most active, the shape of any given ministry may vary.

A triangular history

The ministry with which I have most direct contact is that of port ministry. In theory, the various port ministries that have existed and are now found only in Montreal and Vancouver, were founded when the evangelical emphasis was at the fore. This evangelical emphasis had its roots in the confessional emphasis. The ministries were established to bring the gospel to merchant mariners perhaps with a desire to make them somehow become a church.

However, as our CRC maritime or port ministry developed, the predominant emphasis has changed. The present ministry is much more transformational than in earlier years. We are concerned with ministering to the whole seafarer meeting his spiritual, social, physical, emotional, and justice needs.

These changes are not limited to what is being done in the CRC, as other denominations also have port ministries, and most of them are much larger than our own. In North America alone, there are port ministries run by the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican/Episcopalian Church, the various Lutheran Churches, and the Southern Baptist Church. Other independent missions are run by Pentecostal groups and even some cults and sects. Each of these port ministries reflects different but identifiable emphases.

Indeed, I suggest that the emphases: confessional, evangelical, and transformational, can be found in every denomination in the world, not just in the ministries they have developed. How they work themselves out in actual practice is what makes categorization so elusive. The "boxes" have constantly changing sides.

Perhaps "boxes" is an inappropriate term for a shape with three dimensions! A triangle is probably a better visualization. Each of the three emphases describes one of the sides. As I see it, the dominant emphasis labels the longest side.

Ideally, I suppose, the triangle should be equilateral, with each of the emphases being of equal importance. Practically, the triangles tend to be isosceles (having two equal sides) or scalene (having no equal sides). And what's more, the length of the sides keeps changing as our emphases keep changing!

Leder asks "How will our descendants describe the mind of the CRCNA in the 2040's, if there is still such a recognizable institution?" I would suggest that the answer lies in whatever mind or emphasis is dominant in 2040. The triangle may be very skewed, but there will still be one.

Stations on life's way

This whole business of the flexible-sided or changing triangle can be used to explain one's personal development, as well as a church's development. In my 68 years, I can look back and see what emphases were dominant at different stages in my life. I grew up in a fundamentalist, Baptist background where the dominant emphasis was evangelical.

Later during university years and my early years of marriage I was introduced to reformed teaching and was gradually per-

See **Geometry** *p. 6...*

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Opinion

Good Liberal Christians

Dirk Schouten

Recently, I've become interested in liberal Christianity. No, I haven't become an apostate; I still believe the resurrection occurred and dream about the new earth.

Actually, it's not liberalism that has my attention so much. Rather, I spend a lot of time thinking about the patterns of thought that accompany liberal Christians' answers to the question, "Who was Jesus?" Though not always, people's interpretations of Christ are often tied to their extended political views. Although it seems ironic, even impossible, some very good liberal Christians offer humane and environmentally-friendly reasons for not believing that Jesus Christ was God.

That Christians reject the deity of Jesus is a puzzle to me, since I understand reality from a framework that recognizes the vital role of Christ in it. With Christ as the centre of history, your mind forms a certain picture of the world. To see Christ as only human is to look at a completely different picture. Yet I'm still intrigued by good liberal Christians and the compelling reasons they offer for rejecting Christ's divinity.

Jesus 'among the lowly' Leon Augustin L'hermitte c.1890

Four years ago, I began journalism studies at the University of British Columbia. My best friend during those two years was a classmate, a 38-year-old "post-modern Mennonite." For him, faith was about action, not doctrine. He called the stories of the virgin birth and the resurrection "hocus-pocus," and shook his head in annoyance whenever I tried to engage him in discussions on theology. I was barking up the wrong tree, he said, wasting both his time and mine. For him, being a Christian meant one thing – working the way Christ did. You fed the hungry, visited the lonely, spoke up for the oppressed, confronted greed, enjoyed community.

Did he live up to these (biblical) ideals? Yep. Like no one else I've known. He gave of himself to others, spoke gently to people who were suffering, carried himself with modesty and fought injustice. An environmentalist, he biked whenever he could, recycled regularly, used up a minimal amount of consumable goods and savoured the raw thrill of the outdoors. As an anti-consumerist activist, he wrote for anti-capitalism publications and started a Web site that encouraged people to buy nothing at Christmas. He loved people and the world – and God.

My friend didn't reject the doctrine of Christ's divinity because of a lack of knowledge of it. He knew it. But he interpreted the belief that humans need saving knowledge of Christ as impractical, since it excluded the vast majority of people both living and already dead. He saw value in the efforts of all who earnestly pursued God – no matter what religion.

For him, the doctrine of Christ's divinity – and the rituals and routines it involves – was an irritant. He once told me of an essay he read that argued that the medieval view of the cosmos (i.e. heaven is above the earth, and hell is underneath it) was dangerous to the environment since it set up the earth as a place from which we need to leave. So the notion that people float up to heaven thanks to Christ's blood, in his opinion, helped to harm the earth.

A year ago, at the wedding of a college buddy, I chatted with the Unitarian minister who led the service. I told her I belonged to the Christian Reformed Church, and we began a discussion on the pros and cons of growing up in an insular, ethnic community. She said she understood there would be benefits to growing up Dutch Reformed, but concluded with a warning. "The problem with these communities is that they can't last," she said. "They're bound to fall apart when the bigger world comes into them." Her own church congregation, she said, was a mix of people from major and minor religions, and their communal goal was social justice. Most of the sentences she spoke to me included the word "work."

Just as my UBC friend couldn't fit the resurrection into his worldview (a view that put people and the earth ahead of capitalist progress), this minister had reasons for not holding the notion of Jesus' divine nature at the centre of her theology. In short, the doctrine would hinder her work as someone who brought people together for the goal of social improvement. For her, bringing together people of different religions was a greater accomplishment than to be religiously exclusive – and enjoy the benefits of exclusivity. She agreed it was possible to work with a group of people whose confessional statements were different than your own, but maintained that true religious communion with them would be impossible if you saw yourself as "right" and them as "wrong."

An acquaintance of mine, an Anglican, doesn't believe Christ's resurrection took place, but confidently calls himself a Christian nevertheless and attends church regularly. According to him, the "resurrection" was, and is, metaphoric – Christ offered himself to God and humans to the point of death, and because of this level of sacrifice, is "resurrected" in the devotion we offer him daily. He believes Jesus' life offered a pattern that each of us needs to recognize – a pattern of suffering. Only by giving up can we make peace with God and each other. In offering yourself, you can move to a new level of living. When I asked him if Christ was the Son of God, he answered, "Yes, he was, absolutely....but aren't we all sons and daughters of God?" When I asked him what it meant to receive everlasting life through Christ's sacrifice, he said we're remembered through the stories our progeny tell of us. For him, eternal life was narrative.

* * * *

These people are not apathetic to religion. They are serious about God and their faith. I believe God is in them. Yet, I still have trouble with the implications of what they profess.

For starters, there's human history. Traditional Christians view history as having three parts – Creation, Fall and Redemption, as well as a beginning and an end. Christ's divinity plays a central part in each of these, especially Redemption. But if you take away Christ's divinity, biblical eschatology gets chucked out the window, since the rejection of this divinity implies that no Second Coming can take place and, therefore, no final establishment of his kingdom will occur. How, I'd like to ask my liberal friends, will history unfold? Is it going anywhere in particular or is it simply a compilation of human actions?

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Geometry... *cont from p.5.*

suaded to move from being a Baptist to becoming Presbyterian. The Presbyterian and Reformed tradition is much more confessional than the Baptist tradition. My triangle changed shape.

Later still, having moved to Canada (30 years ago in August, 2004), and having worked in Christian schools for 21 years, port ministry for 7 and as a pastor for three and half years, I find that the transformational emphasis is now the strongest. Perhaps a couple of personal anecdotes will help explain how this has come to be.

Slippery metaphors

Back in the 1980's I remember receiving a letter inviting me to join with the group who called themselves Concerned Members. (I expect most if not all of them can be found in United Reformed congregations today.) I responded in my letter stating that I, too, was a concerned member. However, I just was *not* concerned about the same things they were concerned about. I never got a response.

Later, in the early 90's the big issue was the so-called "slippery slope" argument against women-in-office. Since then I've gotten to thinking about that position. Those who promoted this argument obviously assumed that they were at the top of the slope and if women were going to be allowed into church office, the slippery slope would inevitably cause one to descend from the top of the hill to the bottom where anyone might be allowed to be in office. But the slope could work the other way, just as well. Suppose we are at the bottom and trying to ascend a slippery slope. Each misstep causes us to slide backward into the morass at the bottom from which we are trying to escape. The slippery slope can work both ways. It all depends on where you think you are and where you think you might be headed. I think my direction has been generally upward.

Where will I be in 2040? What will my triangle look like? Well that's 36 years from now. I'll be 104 and I hope no longer living. But given the fact that my personal triangle has been constantly changing, I see no reason why it should solidify now and become rigid-sided. It hasn't in the past, and knowing myself, it probably won't in the future. Maybe, just maybe, it will truly become equilateral! Wouldn't that be something!

Rev. Lloyd Burghart recently retired from his ministry to seafarers in Montreal and now lives in Fonthill, Ontario.

Norman Podhoretz: clearing the fog of war

Norman Podhoretzby
ALEXANDER HUNTER (THE WASHINGTON TIMES)

Harry Antonides

If you rely only on the mainstream media to make sense of the war against terrorism, you might believe that the United States is a threat to world peace. You might also think that President Bush is a dangerous man who lied about the reasons for going to war, is in cahoots with big business, and does not care about the death and destruction caused by his "cowboy" leadership.

What is odd about this view of reality is that it has a large following in the free West, including in Canada, and even in the United States itself. Think of the enthusiastic reception of the Michael Moore film that is in fact a shameful catalogue of innuendo and outright lies.

Voices of reason are rare

Unfortunately, the voices of reason and fairness on this topic among the cultural elite in this country are few. Here it is not unusual for some of our own parliamentarians to describe Americans in offensive terms – to say nothing of the nastiness toward the U.S. that is common fare in the Canadian broadcast and print media. A recent poll found that 40 per cent of Canadian teens believe that Americans are "evil," while 64 per cent of francophone teens hold that opinion.

The situation is more positive in the U.S. itself, where there is still a sizable core of able apologists of that country's role as a defender of the free world. One of such voices belongs to a battle-hardened veteran of a half-century of vigorous intellectual sparring in the liberal-conservative (or left-right) contest.

Norman Podhoretz, best known for his long career as the editor of *Commentary*, started out as a member of a liberal circle of influential New York intellectuals. But he switched sides when he began to realize the disastrous consequences of these ideas. He turned his back on them when they defended the Stalinist tyranny and attacked the United States as the enemy.

His former friends never forgave him. For details of that fascinating story, see his *Ex-Friends* (1999), and *Breaking Ranks* (1979) in which he explains "how and why I went from being a liberal to being a radical and then finally to being an enemy of radicalism in all its forms and varieties."

Podhoretz has been an eloquent defender of Israel's right to exist in the midst of a sea of detractors and enemies. Similarly, he has written substantial pieces in defence of America's role as the major bulwark against the totalitarian enemies of the democratic West.

His most recent publication is a lengthy overview of America's pivotal role on the world scene, covering World War I, II, III (the Cold War), and IV (the war against terrorism). It is published in the September issue of *Commentary* (also available on the Internet) with the title "World War IV, How It started, What It means, and Why We Have to Win."

In his "Note to the Reader" Podhoretz explains that we seem to have lost sight of the context in which the details of the events in Iraq can be measured and understood. For this reason he has "tried to step back from the daily barrage and to piece together the story of what this nation has been fighting to accomplish since September 11, 2001." He warns:

" …[W]e are only in the very early stages of what promises to be a very long war, and Iraq is only the second front to have been opened in that war: the second scene, so to speak, of the first act of a five-act play. In World War II and then in World War III, we persisted in spite of impatience, discouragement, and opposition for as long as it took to win, and this is exactly what we have been called upon to do today in World War IV… For today, no less than in those titanic conflicts, we are up against a truly malignant force of radical Islamism and in the states breeding, sheltering, or financing its terrorist armory."

Podhoretz reviews the events that led up to the 9/11 attacks, the failure to "connect the dots" that in hindsight should have, but did not, alert the various agencies of the current and previous administrations to what was really happening. He concludes that the failure to respond forcefully to a long list of attacks on U.S. forces and citizens, beginning in the 1970s, led the haters of America to think that it was really only a paper tiger.

He believes that this is what caused Osama bin Laden to miscalculate America's reaction to the 9/11 attacks. The same for Saddam Hussein who was emboldened – despite being defeated in the first Gulf War – by the fact that he retained power. He continued to defy the numerous U.N. resolutions, demanding that he comply with the agreements he himself signed, or else. That "or else" did not impress Saddam for he thought that that was mere bluff.

See **Norman Podhoretz** *p.* 15...

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I'd like to ask my Anglican friend about his belief that we live on in the memories of those who follow us. What about those who don't have children, or are reclusive by nature, or didn't live memorable lives? What about the fact that most people are forgotten within a generation or two of their deaths? I'm not sure his ideas about "eternal life" give hope. Even biblical writers were consistent in how they portrayed the life of a person – you're here for a short time, then you die, then you're forgotten.

Finally, I find it curious that liberal Christians even call themselves Christians when they don't believe traditional biblical ideas about what Jesus did, is doing now or will do in the future. To a degree, I understand why they keep the designation. The several liberal Christians I know grew up in traditional Christian families, so they learned bible stories and biblical eschatology as children. But as they moved towards adulthood, their lives and minds developed. They traveled, read books, developed relationships with people from other communities. As time passed, they could no longer believe some key biblical ideas about Christ's nature – at least not in the manner the Christian religion has presented these concepts over the past 1700 years. God, people, devil, heaven, hell, belief, doubt, eternal life, damnation. The world is not like that, they said to themselves. God cannot be like that. Yet the Christian ethic – the idea that you're here to give to others while enjoying and pondering the mysteries of God – was still very much a part of their way of thinking. So the term Christian still fits, they said. Christ is the person they want to resemble.

I can buy that, although I hope liberal Christians understand that they have the freedom to name themselves after any influential person who gave him/herself up for a cause. Martin Luther King did a lot of good during the 1960s, so why not set up a church of "Kingians"? Those who want to bring about change through non-violent means could become "the Ghandians." Mother Theresa was a paragon of virtue. Why don't good liberal Christians drop the name "Christian" for a century and establish the Church of the Living Theresa?

It may sound like I'm attempting mockery. I'm not. I just want to address what I consider an irony – that liberal Christians name themselves after someone they think has been dead for 2000 years. Although I don't want to suggest that changes in language need to occur, I'm compelled to believe that the most honest designation for liberal Christians is the term "spiritual humanists." That's what they are. They're concerned about authentic spirituality, and they care about others. This term also acknowledges the freedom from institutional religion they passionately maintain.

* * * *

At the risk of sounding patronizing, I'll admit that I'm inspired by authentic liberal Christians despite theological differences we have. They are peaceful people committed to addressing the complexity of social injustice, an obligation that was never top priority in the Dutch Reformed community I grew up in. Even now, in this global village, I think many of us Christians still choose personal piety over social action because it's not messy, risky or boring. It's easy to critique a sermon. It's easy to argue over worship styles. It's easy to fly to Haiti to build the concrete foundation of a church, then go home and thank the congregation for the money and prayers. It's easy to understand theology.

It's not easy, though, to participate in multi-faith discussions, even though 9/11 has demanded this dialogue take place. It's not easy to get involved in dull legislative battles in order to pass laws that would benefit the needy. It's not easy to sit down with a 800-page book entitled *A Long, Dull Essay on The State of the Earth's Resources and What Will Happen if We Keep Going At This Pace.* It's not easy to fly to Haiti, study how its economic despair can be turned around, then return home to report your findings to your church congregation and local community leaders.

(Note: I remember the rituals of my own boyhood church community. We vilified lousy preachers, argued over women-in-office, gave buckets of money to the denomination and flew young people to the Caribbean to build concrete foundations and a couple walls. When it came to putting faith into action, we chose the dramatic options.)

* * * *

From good liberal Christians, I hear about the entrapments of consumerism, individualism and capitalism. They tell me reality is, to a greater degree than Christians want to believe, socially constructed. A large, wealthy company is not the picture of success, they whisper. Neither is that man sitting over there in the three-piece silk suit.

Another benefit I receive from having good liberal Christians as friends and acquaintances is that they act as a form of conscience for me. They're focused on the here and now, since they don't bother with worrying about what comes after it. I want to be more like that myself. When I get too bogged down with right doctrine, when I worry too much about the other side will look like, I should think about them.

And get back to work.

Church

US Protestant majority may be thing of the past, study suggests

Chris Herlinger

New York (ENI) – A long-standing feature of US religious life – a Protestant majority – may become a thing of the past, a new survey has concluded.

"Since colonial times the United States has been a Protestant nation. But perhaps as early as this year (2004), the country will for the first time no longer have a Protestant majority," the survey by the National Opinion Research Center, based at the University of Chicago, found.

The number of those identifying themselves as Protestant, already declining in recent years, is expected to drop below 50 per cent if present trends continue, the survey results announced on July 20. A Protestant majority may have already vanished in the two years since the survey was conducted.

"The recent Protestant decline comes in large part from the loss of younger adherents and a related drop in the retention rate," the survey states. It adds that a number of factors "indicate that the Protestant share of the population will continue to shrink and they will soon lose their majority position in American society."

The survey of more than 2650 respondents in 2002 found the number of those identifying themselves as Protestant dropped from 63 per cent to 52 per cent between 1993 and 2002. At the same time, those saying they had no formal religious ties or identification increased from 9 per cent to nearly 14 per cent.

Other factors cited in the study for the decline of Protestant identification included increased numbers of immigrants from non-Protestant countries and the fact that fewer people in the United States are being raised as Protestants.

The so-called "retention rate" for Protestants has also been dropping. From 1973 up to 1993, nine out of 10 Protestants raised in a Protestant home remained Protestant; however, now less than 83 per cent remain Protestant as adults.

Although Protestants have been a majority in the United States, Roman Catholics have constituted the nation's biggest single denominational affiliation.

Montagnard refugees face second danger in Cambodia

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (Zenit.org) – A group of Christian Montagnards who fled repression in Vietnam are now facing a hostile backlash on Cambodian soil.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen is considering sending troops into his country's forested northeast to root out more than 200 Montagnards who fled Vietnam's central highlands after a police crackdown on protesters last April. The protesters were seeking land and religious rights.

The refugees have been living off tubers and rainwater in Cambodia's malaria-ridden jungles for months. Local hill tribe sources have told the *Cambodia Daily* that up to 250 Montagnards may be hiding in the border region and that several have fallen seriously ill.

Groups of the Montagnards have been photographed and interviewed by reporters from the English-language newspaper. The Hun government has alternately denied their existence, called them illegal immigrants or accused them of plotting a separatist movement, *AsiaNews* reported.

"We must examine if they are illegal immigrants or if they want to form an autonomous zone," Hun said. "If they have hidden campsites to form an autonomous zone, we will use force to destroy them."

The prime minister said the government would allow the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to open an office in the northeast, so long as it was not used as a refugee camp.

Montagnard woman with child

In the meantime, the UNCHR has been restricted to operating in Phnom Penh and forbidden from opening an office where the refugees could be interviewed and given asylum.

Hun Sen's comments follow recent appeals from King Noro-dom Sihanouk, who is in self-exile in North Korea, that the refugees receive humanitarian assistance.

A team of palace officials who made a four-hour tour of the vast border region said they could not find any refugees to whom to distribute the rice and medicine ordered by the king.

"The villagers are afraid of us. They hide information," said Um Em, undersecretary of state at the palace after returning from the tour. "We need to have a network to show us where the Montagnards are located, but right now we can't find the network."

Local and international human rights groups have criticized the Cambodian government's handling of the Montagnards. The Cambodian Red Cross, headed by Hun Sen's wife, says that aiding the refugees falls outside its mandate of helping natural disaster victims.

The Vietnamese government has denied the existence of Montagnard refugees and barred international agencies and reporters from entering the central highlands at the time of the protests. Hundreds of Montagnards who fled Vietnamese oppression to Cambodia in 2001 were eventually granted refugee status and asylum in the United States.

Economic disparities threaten survival of the church, says Alliance president

Jerry L. Van Marter

LOUISVILLE, Kentucky – Global economic disparities are "not just some problem somewhere but are destroying our churches," said new World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) president Clifton Kirkpatrick upon his return from the Alliance's 24th General Council in Accra, Ghana.

"That the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer, and that the global economic system is the fundamental cause, is the context in which the church is trying to minister all over the world," Kirkpatrick said in an interview. "This issue is at the core of the problem of trying to proclaim the gospel while the world is destroyed.

"What was clear in listening to our Presbyterian brothers and sisters around the world is that if present trends continue, there's not much future for the world."

WARC is the Geneva-based family of Presbyterian, Reformed and Congregational churches representing more than 75 million Christians in more than 200 denominations.

Kirkpatrick said his election as president of the Alliance – which was sharply critical of US government economic and trade policies – represents "appreciation for the Presbyterian Church (USA) for our standing with and for the poor over many years. There was also appreciation for our commitment to world mission and justice."

Kirkpatrick said the mood of the Council was not anti-US, but "anger and resentment directed against the 'North' for impoverishing the 'South.' There was no anti-American 'groundswell,' but a firm conviction that policies must change."

The WARC General Council's message condemned communism, but also, Kirkpatrick said, "cautioned against a capitalism that is not moderated by concern for the economic, social and political welfare of all people."

Kirkpatrick spoke movingly about visiting "slave castles" in Accra, which was a hub of North American slave trade. "To visit the slave dungeons, where slaves were held while awaiting shipment across the Atlantic, and to see that the Reformed church sat atop them was heartbreaking," he said. "To know that the church didn't stand up for those oppressed then created a sense of urgency for us now."

Although it faces many challenges, Kirkpatrick said WARC "is probably the healthiest organization in the ecumenical movement." A vast majority of Presbyterian and Reformed churches in the world are WARC members, a particularly healthy sign, given that "splintering is characteristic of Reformed churches throughout history."

One issue threatening the PC(USA) but not WARC unity is homosexuality. It was discussed in Accra, but Kirkpatrick said only one action was taken -- to affirm the human rights of all persons, regardless of sexual orientation.

"Of course we acknowledged that churches are in very different places. But we took no action on ordination or ministry," Kirkpatrick said. "And we made two commitments: that we would be open to hear each other, and that this is not our most important priority and will not be a church-dividing issue."

Like all ecumenical organizations, WARC struggles financially. It has historically been dependent upon European churches for the bulk of its funding, and changing tax laws for churches in Germany "have major implications for WARC," Kirkpatrick said. "I'm particularly struck," he added, "by the growth of African churches' contributions."

Kirkpatrick said he experienced in Accra "a growing recognition that if we're going to accomplish anything, we need to renew our churches." He pointed to the growing number of partnerships between PC(USA) presbyteries and congregations and overseas partners, which he said have "proven effectiveness as sources of spiritual renewal." He said he would like to build such partnership programs into WARC.

The value of such cross-cultural sharing became clear to Kirkpatrick through the daily Bible study groups that were part of the Council. "My group was filled with people from the poorest places on earth -- Bangladesh, Ghana, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, the Philippines -- and we studied the Book of Ruth. We looked at the story as 'getting along' in another system, but for them this was their system. The Bible really comes alive as we learn about these other situations. Their perspective is so biblical, and so uncomfortable for us, and so moving for all of us.

"If everyone could be in Bible study with folk from these places, we'd see a global transformation."

Presbyterians can't do everything, Kirkpatrick conceded, "but we can find ways to live more simply, to exercise better stewardship, to resist consumerism and to work together to change the world. Me? I've been thinking about trading in my 10-year-old Honda. Now I'm going to drive that thing until it flat dies."

Indian police watch as Hindus desecrate Catholic church

New Delhi, Aug. 27 (CWNews.com) — Church leaders in India's eastern Orissa state are sharply criticizing local police for their failure to stop the desecration of a church. Archbishop Raphael Cheenath of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar reported that an armed Hindu mob stormed the Our Lady of Charity parish church in the town of Raikia on August 27.

The attack came after local police dispersed a crowd of parishioners who had gathered around the church. Police reportedly remained on the scene, watching, as the Hindu zealots burst into the church.

"The fundamentalists broke the main door of the church in police presence," Archbishop Cheenath said.

The Hindu militants then destroyed sacred vessels, broke statues, and burned vestments. They also stoned the residence of the parish priest, and threatened the parishioners with further violence.

"The sad part is that even after coming to know of the trouble, the police made no effort to prevent or stop the attack," the archbishop told CWN. "Instead, they remained spectators for hours to the whole attack."

Orissa, whose state government is controlled by the Hindu-nationalist BJP party, has been the site of frequent religious clashes, with Hindu extremists threatening and assaulting Christians and other minorities.

Tonsured Christians return home to hostile village in India

DELHI, India (Compass) — A group of Christians have returned to their village in Orissa, India, six months after Hindu villagers shaved their heads bare. The Christians and their families lived for six months in sheltered housing provided by a church in the state capital but returned home on August 8 under heavy police guard.

However, fellow villagers did not welcome their return; the Christians were initially barred from using the public well and are still barred from local employment. Pastor Subas Samal and six others were also charged with "forced conversion" under Orissa's anti-conversion law. The accused say they hope to settle the case out of court.

Elsewhere in Orissa, church leaders have sharply criticized police for their recent failure to protect a Catholic church.[See story above.]

Nigerian Anglican Church makes HIV test mandatory for couple

Obed Minchakpu

Lagos, Nigeria (ENI) – The HIV/AIDS pandemic which has resulted in the infection of more than three million persons in Nigeria, has led the country's Anglican church to join other denominations in demanding that church members intending to wed must undertake HIV tests to qualify to marry in church.

The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) said its decision to make it mandatory for intending couples to be screened for HIV was to contain the spread of the disease, and came in advance of a statement on Monday from the Interfaith HIV/AIDS Coalition of Nigeria, that the pandemic had affected every community.

Other churches that already ask intending couples to be tested for HIV include the Evangelical Church of West Africa, Nigerian Baptist Convention, Church of Christ in Nigeria, and a Pentecostal church, the Deeper Life Bible Church.

Anglican Archbishop Ephraim Ademowo of Lagos said the AIDS pandemic had reached such an alarming level that the church needed to do everything to contain its spread. "Priests in our churches must take the responsibility of preaching chastity," as a contingency he told Ecumenical News International.

The archbishop also cautioned Nigerians and Christians especially against the stigmatization of people living with HIV/AIDS, adding "infected people should not be ostracized but rather embraced."

According to Archbishop Ademowo, the fear of contacting HIV/AIDS by using the same chalice at Holy Communion has to be set straight as no person can contract the disease through such use. "That fear is unfounded," he said.

Ademowo also called on the Nigerian government to impose stiff penalties on medical personnel who failed to screen donated blood before transfusions.

No free speech in preaching

Lars Grip

Stockholm (ENI) – A Swedish court sentenced a Pentecostal pastor to one month in prison after finding him guilty of offending homosexuals in a sermon. The case was the first trial test of the national law against incitement as applied to speech about homosexuals.

Last year during a sermon delivered in the east coast town of Borgholm, Ake Green described homosexuality as "abnormal, a horrible cancerous tumor in the body of society." He called homosexuals "perverts, whose sexual drive the Devil has used as his strongest weapon against God."

During proceedings, the public prosecutor, Kjell Yngvesson, played a tape recording from the sermon. According to the church newspaper *Kyrkans Tidning*, he justified the arrest by saying, "One may have whatever religion one wishes, but [the sermon] is an attack on all fronts against homosexuals. Collecting Bible [verses] on this topic as he does makes this hate speech."

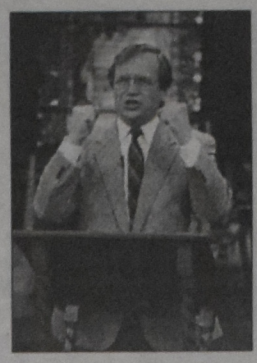
In his defense, the pastor said he merely wanted to make clear the biblical view on homosexuality, not to express disrespect.

Green's lawyer pointed to the contradiction between religious freedom and freedom of speech on the one hand, and the rights of homosexuals to be protected against discrimination on the other. A verdict of guilty would violate the pastor's right to preach about his beliefs, the lawyer said. Soren Andersson, president of a Swedish federation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights, said religious freedom is never a reason to offend people. "Therefore," he told journalists, "I cannot regard the sentence as an act of interference with freedom of religion."

Yngvesson asked the court to impose a prison sentence on the pastor. Green is expected to appeal.

Nigeria stops mass revival meetings by German evangelist

Obed Minchakpu



ILORIN, Nigeria (Compass) — Religious passions flared in Nigeria following the decision of the Kwara state government to stop a series of evangelistic meetings organized by German evangelist Reinhard Bonnke with the support of all churches in the city of Ilorin.

The central Nigerian state of Kwara dispatched policemen to stop the five-day program after its second day on Thursday, August 19, claiming that if the meetings were allowed to continue, Muslim militants would attack Christians at the meeting grounds the following day.

Alhaji Bolaji Abdullahi, Kwara state governor's assistant in communications and strategy, said that the government's action stemmed from the need to prevent bloody religious crisis in Ilorin, the state capital.

"The government moved against the religious program in an apparent balancing act to forestall a security breach, after allowing the crusade to run for two out of the five days it was scheduled, despite protests from Muslims," Alhaji Abdullahi said at the press conference.

According to him, "It was in the government's effort to strike a compromise that allowed Bonnke's crusade to go ahead. But the government limited the crusade to two days, as against five days the organizers originally scheduled to hold it. This was against the backdrop of threats of sectarian violence slated for the aftermath of Jumaat (Friday) services by the Muslims," he added.

Muslim militants protested the evangelistic meetings the weekend before Bonnke arrived in Ilorin, August 17, his first trip to Kwara state in 14 years. The program was organized by Christians in the state under the auspices of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN).

Dr. Olusola Ajolore, Kwara state secretary of CAN, told worshippers on Thursday at the meeting grounds, "The government said we should stop the crusade after tonight. They said they would seal off the ground that we bought with our money if we would not comply."

Bonnke reportedly sensed the tension that could spark clashes between Christians and Muslims and prevailed on the Christian leaders to refrain from any act that could lead to bloodshed.

Besides stopping the program, over 30 armed policemen prevented pastors gathered at Word Assembly Ground, Ajase-Ipo, from praying for the success of the meetings. The policemen, who were directed by the government to seal off the church, also cordoned off the church's premises.

After the announcement that ended the meetings, thousands of Christians mounted a protest against the government's action. They were heading towards the Government House before anti-riot policemen shot sporadically into the air to disperse them.

Ajolore accused the government of pandering to the whims of Muslims in the state. He described the program's cancellation as ill-motivated and conceived.

"The Kwara state government has by ... cutting short the crusade shown that it is incapable of holding the group [of Muslims] in check...," said Ajolore at a press conference.

In a statement titled, "Muslims Now Call the Shots in Kwara State," Christian leaders said, "We see this as an absolutely dangerous precedent." According to them, "We believe that the whole development was a conspiracy by the Muslim group to put the Christian community out of activity and make them the underdog in the state. This is our state, and we will not continue to tolerate any breach in the exercise of our freedom of association, in worshiping in places of our choice and our own properties."

Alhaji Salman Adelodun Ibrahim, Kwara state secretary, denied the accusation of the CAN leadership, saying that CAN had agreed that "the crusade must terminate by Thursday night, and that during the crusade, Rev. Bonnke will neither hold processions inside the city of Ilorin nor hold any meeting outside the advertised crusade ground at Budo-Efo."

Short Story

Wedding Dress

Cathy Smith

Katherine knew exactly when it had started…with Shirley's bridal shower. The office girls had invited her. She was touched by the way they always included her, even though she was the custodian at Bethel Manor, and not part of the administrative staff. Of course, she belonged to the same church as Grace and Shirley, but, still, they were all younger than she was. Whenever relatives of the residents brought cherry cheesecake or Mississippi Mudpie to the main office, the girls would always save her a piece. She would protest and say that she didn't need it. They would hand her a plate and tell her that she deserved a break! She couldn't argue with that – she did work hard.

She'd been looking forward to the shower. She'd told herself it would be fun, and heaven knew she could use some fun. It had been forty days since Edward had moved out. Soon, she had thought, soon, she'd be counting it in months, not days. It wasn't the first time they'd separated, but this time, Katherine knew, it was for good.

The bridal shower was at Melissa's. It had doubled as an opportunity for the girls to view Melissa's new home since her own wedding just a few months ago. When Katherine arrived, Shirley was already enthroned on a chair decorated with purple streamers and balloons. All the girls were wearing purple, too, because that was the color of the bridesmaids' dresses. There was a cheerful atmosphere in the livingroom as everyone admired the decorations and checked out one another's purple attire.

Grace had suggested a tour. The cozy bungalow sparkled with newlywed attention. The girls chuckled at the spare bedroom. Once upon a time it had been a nursery, and it still sported a teddy bear border and stars that glowed in the dark on the ceiling.

"When's this room going to have a little occupant?" Janice teased Melissa.

She winked back and vowed, "Not for a long time!" Then it was back to the livingroom for more refreshments.

Katherine had been captivated by a large framed photograph that dominated one wall of the livingroom. A toddler stood in a pool under a waterfall, arms upraised in ecstasy as crystal spray was flung all around her. Her expression was radiant.

Melissa explained, "That was photographed by my uncle in Thunder Bay. He's an amateur, but he's really pretty good, don't you think? The girl is his daughter. It won an award at a local competition. I really like it."

Katherine stood for a while longer, marveling at the intense joy on the child's uplifted face and the clarity of the water droplets against the background greenery.

After everyone had sampled the buffet, Melissa introduced a fun activity to do before opening the gifts. All the girls had to pair off. Katherine and Shirley, Grace and Lucy, Barbara and Janice. Melissa handed each one of them a roll of toilet tissue.

"Now," she instructed, "one of you is the bride and the other is the mother of the bride. Moms, you have to dress your daughter in a beautiful gown which you will create out of your tissue roll. You may use only one roll! I'll be the judge of the most beautiful bride when everyone is finished."

Laughing amiably, the "moms" went to work. Janice, ever the comedian, outfitted Barbara in a draped creation that would have been scandalous had she not been wearing a purple dress underneath.

"It's a seductive, contemporary look," she dead-panned. "It's all the rage in Paris! Go ahead," she urged Barbara, "walk the runway." She propelled Barbara down the hall, improvising a fashion commentary on the spot. "Tonight, we are sooo excited to witness the newest creation of the famous French designer, Janice, ah... Bouvier. Janice has chosen to concentrate once again on her signature style, the bare minimalist look, allowing the body plenty of exposure for freedom for movement."

Barbara played along, putting on her best haute couture face, twirling at the end of the hall, and sashaying back to the livingroom.

Lucy had managed to form a cowl neck on Grace's gown and was busy tucking long strips of tissue into her "belt."

"I'm having trouble here because of your sweatshirt," she groused. "Grace, why did you wear such a baggy old thing? You look pregnant!"

"It's the only thing I own that's purple! If I'd known I was going to model a wedding dress, I might have taken some precautions nine months ago," Grace shot back good-naturedly.

Shirley was having better luck with Katherine's gown. Wrapping tissue in horizontal strips snugly around her chest, she created a strapless bodice. Because Katherine was wearing a tank top, and only the shoulder straps showed, it looked almost perfect.

Then, catching on to Lucy's idea, Shirley began hanging strips of tissue side by side from a tissue sash to create a passable-looking skirt in the front. As a crowning touch, Shirley wound some tissue into a headband with a dainty bow and arranged it perkily in Katherine's hair.

Finally each bride was made to pose in front of the large oak mirror hanging in Melissa's front hall. The vote was unanimous. Katherine's ensemble was definitely the most successful. In the mirror was a mature and lovely woman. Short ash-blonde hair, a few laugh lines around hazel eyes, skin still smooth and flushed from the busyness and fun.

And that's when she lost it. No wonder, really, considering the stress she'd been under. She blinked back the sudden tears with a quick spin away from the mirror. "I wish I'd had a chance to wear a wedding dress," she remarked as lightly as she could. "I would have looked nice in one, I think."

"You didn't wear a wedding dress?" blurted Melissa.

Katherine replied with an embarrassed shrug. These girls were so young. "Well, back in my day, you didn't wear white when you were expecting...."

Janice almost shrieked her shock. "What! You couldn't wear a wedding dress because you were pregnant?"

"Well, my family, my father, wouldn't let me...." She broke off, sensing that she was stammering.

Before Janice could continue, Grace interceded, "I thought maybe you meant you couldn't afford one." In a gentler tone she added, "That must have been really hard. I've heard that couples even had to go and confess their sin to the consistory before they could get married in church."

Katherine nodded her agreement as she pulled off her headpiece. "We had to do that. And now, today, who knows if a couple has been sleeping together what with the pill and everything."

"That's the truth," Janice agreed emphatically.

As the tissue dresses were shed, the slight awkwardness at Katherine's revelation disappeared, and Melissa ceremoniously handed her a gift for being chosen the most beautiful bride. It was a tiny basket trimmed with delicate mauve ribbons and filled with flavored coffees and herbal teas.

"I'll take them to work, so we can all try some," Katherine promised.

Shirley unwrapped her presents and the girls sat for a while, enjoying the time to socialize away from the demands of the office. Janice entertained them with a wild tale about cooking fajitas for the local high school banquet. She soon had them in stitches as she always did.

"Those goofy Grade 11 girls bought fajita kits! Can you believe it! Kits! We had to cook seventy-five kits of fajitas in three hours! We should have just gone to Taco Bell, believe me!"

Later, on her solitary way home, the hilarity of the evening dissipated and sadness engulfed Katherine once more. Her life seemed finished, failed, while these younger women saw only bright futures ahead. How pleased Shirley had been with the bath towels Katherine had given her! If only a set of towels could make her that happy.

Her own wedding day tugged at her memory. She had worn a pink two-piece suit and a pill-box hat. She had looked sophisticated, or so she had believed. The wedding photo on the mantel at home revealed a truer picture of a gangly teenage

"Nay, Harm, nay. Onze Katrien."

Short Story

girl trying to look adult. Those naive Grade 11 girls Janice had poked fun at were only a year younger than she had been when she got married! Edward had looked nice in the new suit his parents had bought him. He still had pimples, she remembered.

But at the ceremony both sets of parents had been sober-faced. The reason for the hasty wedding hung like a grey cloud over the day. Nor was there a honeymoon. They had moved into the "hired man's house" on her father-in-law's farm and immediately begun the day-to-day life of a poor couple still dependent on their parents.

As Katherine drove into her dark laneway lined with its graceful poplars, her hands tightened on the wheel in futile regret over the past. She had been eighteen. They had only done it once. And the truth was, she'd tried to make Edward stop. Well, not at first, to be absolutely truthful. But he had been persistent and, in no time, it was done. In the back seat of his parents' car. At the very end, she had cried out in sharp surprise at the pain. She had sobbed for a long time afterwards, while he clumsily tried to comfort her. They had been overwhelmed by the enormity of what had occurred. He didn't want her to cry. He swore that it wouldn't happen again. He told her that he loved her....

The motion light her son, Henry, had installed over the car shed door flashed on as Katherine parked the car beside the house. She opened the screen door and unlocked the wooden door which led to the kitchen.

Tilda was so responsible. She never forgot to lock up before she went to bed. Feeling pensive, Katherine put the kettle on. She would try a flavored coffee, perhaps the almond, before she went to bed.

Puttering in the kitchen, she remembered that her mom and dad had cried, too, when she finally had to tell. Her dad! She would never forget his enormous hands covering his face and the one sob wrenched out of him before the words of condemnation poured forth. "Slet, slet," he had raged at her, the little English he knew lost in his fury.

Her mother had remonstrated with him. "Nay, Harm, nay. Onze Katrien. You must not say that. The Lord forgives." She had hugged Katherine then, to cover the harsh words, their tears mingling, but the words remained to this very day.

After Tracy's birth, Edward grew frustrated working for his dad, who rarely let an opportunity go by to remind him about his missed opportunities. When Henry came along, Edward took an opportunity to start trucking for National Freight. Tilda arrived two years later.

How she had tried to atone for her sin! Edward had not seemed so bothered by it, but her father's bitterness and the serious faces of the seventeen men in dark suits seated around the consistory room table had seared her conscience. She slaved in the house and garden, determined to meet the standard.

Monday was wash day, Tuesday, ironing and mending, Wednesday, working in the garden, Thursday, more washing and baking, Friday, clean the house, and Saturday, get the house and kids and clothes and soup ready for Sunday, and Sunday go to church twice. Though they didn't have much money, she sewed pretty dresses for the girls and for herself, too. Edward's and Henry's shoes were always polished.

By the time Henry was in Grade 1, Edward had started accepting longer runs and was away for days, even weeks, at a time. He and his cheques came home more sporadically. By this time, the hired man's house had been exchanged for a nicer home on a lot severed from the farm, but they still paid rent to Edward's dad. The money that made it to the bank dwindled, Edward always having some excuse for the shortage. That was when Katherine had finally taken on the custodial position at the nursing home.

Sometime after Tilda was born, Katherine suspected that Edward was no longer faithful. When he came home after being away so long, he would stay up and watch the late show, needing to unwind, he said. They grew awkward with one another, Katherine holding back, wondering and worried. It was her sister, Tina, who first confided in her what she had heard. When Katherine had stormed and wept, Edward had pleaded with her to forgive him, and she had. But the extended absences continued and so did the doubt, and things were never really the same after that.

She had redoubled her efforts to be a good mother. She read the Bible and prayed with the children at every meal. She took Henry to Cadets and the girls to Calvinettes. When her father-in-law was stricken with cancer, she visited him faithfully. How surprised the whole family had been when his will was read. He had bequeathed the house to her! Not to Edward. Just to her. No one disputed it. By then, everyone had heard the rumors and felt badly for her.

Katherine sipped the fragrant, steaming coffee and wandered through the house. She peeked in on Tilda who had been reading in bed and fallen asleep with her light on. She smiled down at her youngest. The Lord had blessed her in her children at least. All three of them were solid and dependable kids, protective and considerate of her. Tracy, expecting her first. Henry, still a bachelor, but already a deacon. And Tilda, off to college again in the fall for her final year in business.

None of them had been particularly upset when she had informed them that their dad had moved out permanently. Tilda was especially vocal. "Good. I hate it when he's here and you serve him meals and he acts like he belongs here. When was the last time he gave you any money?" It was mostly because of the kids that she had told Edward not to come home anymore. They simply had no respect for him. When he was home, Tilda smoldered continually.

Edward hadn't argued about it either. "If that's the way you feel, Katherine. I don't mind being on my own. I'll get an apartment in Port Billings." But Katherine knew that he wasn't on his own very much.

Part 2 will appear in the next issue.

Reader Beware:
the dead body littering a Flannery O'Connor's story may be one's own

Agnes Kramer-Hamstra

Flannery O'Connor's short stories are not reassuring, or uplifting. She warned those who wanted a "good bedtime story," and a "satisfying" read not to look for instant answers or easy assurance in her stories. The "cure" for Mrs. in "Greenleaf," for instance, comes when the renegade bull on her farm who has been getting loose and munching its way through her tidy hedges, gores her to death.

The serial killer "Misfit" in "A Good Man is Hard to Find" is more riled up about Jesus and how he upset the balance between crime and punishment than the Grandmother who has been faithfully attending church all her life. As he holds his gun to her head, and as the rest of her family is being shot in the nearby woods, she tries to bargain with him by offering him everything she has been living by in her life. She pleads: "but I know you're really 'good blood'; I'll give you all my money." When these offers prove futile, her eyes are suddenly opened and she says: "Why, you're one of my own children, you're one of mine" and she reaches to touch him. This is the only grace in the story, and the Misfit can't take it: he reacts by shooting her. His last words to his partners in crime are that "she would have been a good woman, if someone had been there holding a gun to her head every moment of her life."

Dead bodies sometimes litter the scene in O'Connor's stories. The life of following Christ is messy, because all that we habitually cling to, all we use to resist living in radical dependence on Christ in this world, is burned or cut away in her work. The death that O'Connor pursues in her writing is not physical death but the hard turning away from pride, smugness, hypocrisy, from condescension, bitterness, greed and hatred.

Ruby Turpin, in "Revelation" lays in bed at night fervently thanking Jesus that she wasn't born 'white trash.' A young woman who overhears her talk in a waiting room finally calls her an "old warthog from hell" for her hellish habit of measuring who she is in relation to others. She is brought to a point where she yells at God: "Who do you think you are?" And receives a vision. In it a parade of people are making their way to heaven. All the people she's labeled white trash, black trash, trash who own land and have cars, good blood who've lost their possessions: they're all in the parade. And she sees herself making up the rear, "all her virtues burned away." She has this vision as she hoses down her hog pen.

A close reading of O'Connor's stories is rewarding. They are full of humor. But they will not allow us to drift off into a pleasant sleep, unless we can congratulate ourselves on not being at all like the rotten characters she drags kicking and screaming to the trough of the salvation. Some say her characters are redeemed in the end. It is hard to find evidence for that. All their sins may have been exposed, but many are left standing at a place where it is still up to them to receive the living water. And by then they know it can only come at constant cost to themselves. Sound familiar?

Flannery O'Connor

Some crow triumphalistically that Flannery O'Connor's fiction shows up secular humanists for who they are. The tone of voice in which this is said sounds suspiciously like Ruby Turpin's: the finger is pointing away from self to the "real" trash of this world. What would O'Connor have made of that?

Jesus Christ is end of all,
and the centre to which all tends.
Whoever knows him
knows the reason of everything.

... Blaise Pascal

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven: your kingdom come

By J.H. Sillevis Smitt
Translated by: Jack Van Meggelen

The first petition, *'hallowed be your name,'* helps us focus on God himself. This second petition, *'your kingdom come,'* directs us to God's rule over this earth. We now turn our attention from the creator to the creation.

We might say it like this: "Father, we live in a world which you made. In your world we can only live and prosper when we remain obedient to you. Chaos will result wherever your rule in the lives of people and nations is not recognized."

God is king over his creation. The opinion of people does not change this fact. They may not recognize him as king and claim to be their own boss, but that will not change God as being the absolute ruler of the whole creation. God is and remains the ruler over all things. And one day his glorious rule will be acknowledged by all people. His kingdom *is* here and now, and his kingdom also *comes* to fulfilment later.

Statues from the Lincoln cathedral in Great Britian

When we read the sensitively insightful third chapter of Genesis, and learn how humanity fell into sin, we discover that the cause of our downfall was the desire to "be like God." We want to be in control, king or queen of the castle, so to speak. But whenever we reach for that royal crown we make a caricature of God's kingdom. Then we become dictators or tyrants. Refusing to serve, we inevitably aspire to rule and dominate.

Like Satan, people have disputed God's right to rule. They wish to control life.

I have already mentioned that we pray from the brokenness of our lives. Our existence, our world is in a very sad state. Ultimately, we can't live without God, yet we insist on finding meaning and life apart from him. At the same time, people tend to resist any and all rules or control over their lives. Masters and servants vie for the upper hand, each for their own reasons. In the Old Testament we read the somewhat strange expression, "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit." So it is still today. Harmonious living is only possible when we recognize the need for leadership and direction. Families need parents; nations need governments; a ship needs a captain, and an army needs a general. And it is God who is ruler over all.

But someone else has grabbed the power and authority and then proclaimed himself king over this world. The Bible calls him the prince of this world. This prince has a large following. That's why this world has many 'rulers.' 'Rulers' who each claim to control a part of this world and who each in turn tyrannize people and usurp undue power. Once these rulers have obtained their control they start to dispute the rights others claimed for themselves. The prince of this world and his cohorts have made life on earth chaotic. All the world-wide suffering caused by these tyrants in only one day and one night is astronomical in scope. It creates a world of hospitals and insane asylums; prisons and graves; bordellos and concentration camps. A world full of abuse, slavery, and immorality. A world of coercion and exploitation; lying, cheating and murder, escape and dispersion; starvation and death. Whenever one person starts to lord it over others he will inevitably use his power to tyrannize others into slavery.

Hopefully the time of unfounded optimism that things are getting better all the time; that humanity would improve even more as time went by and that a heaven on earth is just around the corner has passed. The foolishness of this notion has probably been blown to bits by bombs and land mines.

Satan drove the insanity of such views too far for people to keep clinging to them. There has been so much brutality and insanity, and so many lies and demonic influences in the last few decades of our 'civilization' that many who never used to be concerned about anything now live with a prayer on their hearts,

"Father please take all world events once more in your powerful hands. Create order in our chaos, and give us a new and better world to live in. Let your new order shine through where truth and love, community and happiness can develop and blossom, to replace the current threats and fear of the nations."

Many lords and idols

There are many lords in this world who each in their own way try to gain control. Some of the most powerful rulers in this world give allegiance to the god of money. They exercise great control and authority, and many submit and enslave themselves to their power and influence.

Then there is the popular god of lust, and the resultant sexual immorality; the gods of superstition, and mistaken or delusional ideals; even a god of egocentric and arrogant religion.

The damage and evil committed by those who rule in the name of these idols is immeasurable.

Just look at those who are obsessed by alcohol or drugs. The god of intoxication and addiction is especially prevalent today. His subjects are pitiable captives and are deeply unhappy.

Others honor the god of good manners and public opinion. Being politically correct is their aim in life and they serve the god of contrived respectability. Others serve a lord of honor and power, or trudge along in the treadmill of daily routines and artificial humility.

Many are addicted to gambling. I could go on and on. The following of the prince of this world is very large. In fact "Legion" is their name. One thing all these lords have in common with their prince. Their rule always leads to tyranny and their subjects become slaves. Their goal is destruction; they lead their subjects to death.

The only Lord

When we have seen a glimpse of the Kingdom of God and its peace and security, we are appalled that we have to continue to live and breathe in the environment generated by the many lords of this world and their chief. Once we have tasted the goodness of God's kingdom we long for it's full revelation.

Only when we begin to see the kingly stature of Jesus Christ and have developed a taste for the new life dominated by truth and righteousness, does the eternal longing for the self-revelation of his kingdom evolve in us.

Let me give you an example. I'm thinking of an orchestra. All the musicians are seated on the stage and playing their instruments without direction. It creates a cacophony that resembles hell.

But as soon as the conductor arrives and takes control of the group by raising his baton and demanding attention, all eyes are focused on him. One signal, one arm movement suddenly transforms the mayhem into a stream of melodious notes, a harmony of sound that fills the hall. That is what it is like when people subject all their energy and talents to the rule of their heavenly Father.

Then chaos will be changed to order; decay will become prosperity; war will turn to peace; hardship will become delight; and servitude will revert to freedom.

Dreaming dreams

There is a dream about the kingdom and kingship of God. It is the dream of all who acknowledge Jesus as Lord and who have surrendered their life to him. This is the dream of all those who have found peace and happiness under the lordship of Jesus, and project what they have received onto the world around them. For them endless and unlimited vistas open up. They develop a vision of a new world. They see God seated on his throne. They see people living and

"The West Coast Trail" in the last issue on these pages was written by Arlene Van Hove.

Our apologies, Arlene.

The Lord's Prayer/Stewardship

flourishing under the tender care of Jesus. They see the children of God playing in his presence. They see a new heaven and a new earth. They see the dead raised and a multitude that no one can number, a unity of purpose and delight under the unchallenged rule of him who lowered himself to death on the cross, but who has become Lord of all.

Isaiah, the prophet, was such a dreamer,

"The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain...."

Some might say that a dream is only a dream. People tend to exaggerate. On the day of Pentecost, God's dreamers were called 'drunkards' and Herod Agrippa considered them worthless fools.

Sensible people would advise those dreamers to 'get real' and keep their feet on the ground. Yet I could list at least ten beliefs held by those 'sensible' people which are quite delusional.

The dreamer Isaiah saw reality very clearly. And I guarantee you that the apostles saw reality with 20/20 vision. Jesus, the best of all faithful dreamers, knows his people. The fact that those 'sensible' people think they can live without God is the most stubborn and fearful illusion of all. And they continue their denial of reality while the whole world is falling apart around them.

It is really God's faithful dreamers who have cased reality.

Now the inevitable and important questions arise. Do you experience this kingdom of God? Do you even believe it exists? Do you believe that God is king now, and will reveal himself as king to all one day? Are you looking forward to that day? Are you homesick for that kingdom?

While I'm listing these, another question pops up. Do you know which kingdom *you* see? You only see whatever kingdom you serve! Remember, to those who are clean all things are clean, and to those who are unclean all things appear unclean. If you serve only yourself, you see only yourself in all your activities. If you serve the prince of this world you only see the effects of his reign just as one who is unhappily married finds it hard to believe that marriage can be beautiful. And people who quickly speak evil of others, are quick to suspect others of malicious gossip about them.

However, when you have bowed before Jesus as your King, then your eyes are opened to see his glorious kingdom. I am reminded of Jesus' strange words to Nicodemus, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

You can only see the Kingdom of Jesus when you accept his lordship.

What is it you believe in? Do you trust in the power of money or the power of deceit and force? Or do you believe in the power of truth and love?

Ultimately it comes down to this: either you believe in God, or you follow Satan, even though you deny his rule with your voice and your mind.

I hope you are homesick for God's kingdom and that there is in you a deep and powerful desire to pray earnestly and with conviction, *'Our Father in heaven,... your kingdom come.'*

God is King and one day the splendor of his kingdom will be revealed to people and angels alike.

Yes, I know – superficially, this world does not look like God's Kingdom. A million and one events seem to contradict it. The suffering and corruption of the human race seem to contradict the Lordship of God.

Let me use an example. I could imagine a land where the rule of law is present in principle, but where, in fact, riots and insurrection seem to control the daily lives of the people. Law and peaceful enjoyment of life are very much on the books, and expected to be the norm, but in practice it is not visible. So it is with the Kingdom of God. It is here and now, but so many people reject his rule that tyranny, crime, unhappiness and fear seem to rule instead. The more the rule of law is evident in our daily lives the more peaceful our existence. So also the enjoyment of the kingdom of God. Submit yourself willingly and gladly to his rule, and peace will fill your heart and life. It is a long struggle in our personal lives, and a long struggle in our communal life, and will only be completed at the second coming of Christ. So you see: God's kingdom is here *and* it is coming!

It is here now for those who have eyes to see, ears to hear and hearts to experience. It is here for all who have willingly accepted God as the ruler in their lives.

The whole realm of sin and suffering may be in conflict with the vision of the world to come and may even ridicule the idea, but it will be absorbed and defeated by the coming Kingdom.

The night will fade away; the morning will burst forth in all its glory. Just as the rising sun pours its light over a dark and dismal world, so also will the kingdom of God break out over this world, darkened by sin. God's kingdom will have come because his will is done – everywhere!

But remember this: all who pray for the coming of God's kingdom pray for their own removal from the throne. Then we will not rule but serve; not take, but give; not be lords, but servants of Jesus the Risen Savior.

When we say, 'God' we mean he has 'total, complete and unconditional' control. God's kingdom is an absolute kingdom in the best sense of the word. He rules supreme. When Jesus' birth was announced, the angel who came to Mary told her that his kingdom would never end.

There is no height, no depth, no distance, not even a black hole near the edge of the universe where the rule of God's Kingdom is not supreme, and where his sceptre does not sway or his rule does not reach.

When God is king he is king in his own complete unchallenged way. He is king over my body and soul, my house and home, my money and investments, my thoughts and my sex drive, my will and my life, my marriage and my family, as well as the whole community of the world's people. From him and through him are all things, and so all things must return to him.

The two questions

I will ask those two questions once more. *Can* I pray this? Do I *want* to pray this?

Am I ready to stop building my own kingdom? Or have I found my happiness in submitting myself to God?

Am I ready to take off the fake crown that I have coveted all my life and that seemed so important and desirable? Is that silly little tyrant, that miserable, arrogant self really dead in me? Am I prepared to take up battle against that overblown ego? Am I ready to deny my old self, to recognize the wondrous beauty of Christ's kingdom, and learn to long for him to rule in my heart and mind?

Lord teach us to pray, *your kingdom come...* that is, "Father rule us by your word and Spirit, so that we submit ourselves more and more to you." Then the second petition will automatically follow: 'your will be done.'

The 4 T's of Stewardship

Next to the gift of salvation, our greatest treasure, God has given us assets that we are to use to extend his Kingdom and to glorify his name. When we examine all that God has entrusted to us, we can classify our assets using the '4 T's of Stewardship.

Time

God has determined the length of my days. This short interval of time that I may live on earth is so small when compared to eternity, but it is highly important. Time cannot be relived or saved (stored) and it gets used up at the same pace for all of us. Time is most precious.

Talents

Even though we are all created in God's image we are not the same. We reflect different aspects of God and he has gifted me with my skills, aptitudes and abilities. Some of us are very artistic or musical, others more technical or mathematical or physically skilled. We have different subsets of skills and abilities and we find our greatest contentment when we are developing and using the abilities that God has given us.

Trees

By trees we mean the creation – our earth. Not only what we call our own, our homes, our farms or businesses, our cottage, but also what we are responsible for as Canadian citizens – our country. It's a huge chunk of the created world for which we are responsible.

Treasures

God gave us the ability to use our time, our skills and the resources of this world to create goods – our possessions that we treasure. Mankind invented money to facilitate trade of time, talents and trees and treasures. But the ability to work and earn is more important than money. It is God who allows us to labor, mine the ground, cut down the trees and use these resources to make things. It is God who sends the rain and sunshine so that the crops we plant the crops may feed us and provide an income.

It takes people (our time and talents) and resources (trees and treasures) for kingdom ministry to happen. God entrusts us and is willing to provide even more; we just need to be good stewards with his focus in mind.

Stewardly tip: God cares

Don't you find it frustrating to do stewardly things: reduce, reuse, recycle, turn off the lights when they're not needed, lower the thermostat in winter or raise it in summer, minimize engine idling, walk more, use transit more, not wasting my time, and so on; yet, there are so many that just don't seem to care. Just know that God cares – do it for him!

Readers: *We want to share your 'Stewardly Tips' so that we all can do our part to make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Please write or email or visit the CC website. Please leave your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or, if we need to, we can ask you for more details.*

Next issue: Gifted by God: My Time

Healing

A grievous loss, an unexpected letter, and a family found

Mary Wiltenburg

ELLISVILLE, MO. – When the killing began in 1994, Jean Bosco Gakirage was on his way home to Rwanda to be ordained in his childhood church. At a stopover in Rome, he got a message from his parish priest: Do not come home. Your parents, and the whole congregation, have been murdered in the sanctuary.

Gakirage didn't believe it. Defying church leaders, he traveled to the Uganda-Rwanda border and found a bishop willing to ordain him on June 26, eight days before the genocide ceased. From there he sneaked into Rwanda, hurrying, in mortal danger, to his parents' church in the rural town of Musha. The building was sealed, parishioners' corpses inside.

At a loss, Gakirage asked a girl, the only family friend he could find alive, to gather the remaining locals outside the church. She returned with six children. Under a tree, standing feet from his parents' bodies, Father Gakirage said his first mass for them.

"Children," he said, "we usually talk about the Resurrection, but this is not just a question of the words of a priest. Now, it is a reality. We are the Resurrection."

It sounded good. He wanted to believe it. But coming from a culture in which only family members are considered full participants in community life, Gakirage says, he feels he died that day.

A sister in waiting

Joanne Dziubela was 4 years old when her mother slapped her hand away from a sister's veil in their church, hissing, "Don't touch the nun. She's married to Jesus."

Thirty-nine years later, Joanne is Sister Marie Michelle of the Most Sorrowful Passion of Jesus, a cloistered nun in Ellisville, Mo., half an hour's drive west of St. Louis. She and nine other Passionist sisters live there in seclusion and near-silence. Without television, radio, the Internet, or secular newspapers, they pray for a world they learn about through church publications, phone calls, prayer requests, and the occasional visitor.

Ten years ago, a photograph in a missionary magazine caught Sister Marie Michelle's eye. It showed the ordination of a Rwandan priest who came from a big family like hers but who had lost his parents and six siblings in the genocide.

Jean Bosco Gakirage and Sister Marie Michelle with letters.

Some nuns, she knew, make a commitment to pray for a certain person daily for the rest of their lives. Sister Marie Michelle, who had just taken her first vows, asked her mother superior for permission to write the young priest.

The letter

After his ordination, Gakirage's order of Comboni Missionaries sent him to do community-building work in Esmeraldas, Ecuador. One of his jobs at the mission was mail delivery.

As he handed out letters to the other priests, they'd joke with him: "Where's yours?"

"Mine will come next week," he'd say, knowing there was no one left to write him.

Then, in October 1994, an envelope for Gakirage arrived on the Friday mail boat. He checked the name three times: his own. Then he set the letter on the table and stared at it – "to let it rest," he says, "because it had come far."

"I will pray for you every day," Sister Marie Michelle had written. "From now on you can think of me as your sister, and I will call you not 'Father Jean Bosco' but 'mon frère,' "my brother.

Gakirage replied with thanks, promising to pray for her each morning also. He enclosed Psalm 141 (New English Bible).

Today he's surprised by the message he chose:

The evildoers appal me;...
But my eyes are fixed on thee,
O Lord God;
thou art my refuge; leave me
not unprotected....
Let the wicked fall into their own
nets, *whilst I pass in safety,*
all alone.

An opening

Brocade curtains open on a small, fluorescent-lit room. "Father Jean Bosco, you are welcome," Mother Superior Ana Maria Diez Gonzalez says in Spanish.

Overcome, Gakirage cannot speak. "I'm stepping on holy ground," he thinks. "Is it true that I am here?"

It's July 8, 2004. Gakirage has been sent by his order to New Jersey to rest for a few months before heading to a challenging new post in Rome. New acquaintances in Jersey, learning of his longstanding correspondence with Sister Marie Michelle, have sponsored him to pay the Passionist sisters a visit.

"I have been looking forward to this visit for many years," Gakirage calls at last through the bars that separate his spartan visitors' quarters from the convent.

Conversation through this grate is rare for the nuns, who usually communicate with outsiders by calling or passing notes through "the turn," a sort of Lazy Susan embedded in the wall. Letters, too, are comparatively rare: Gakirage hears from Marie Michelle twice a year, and another sister once each season, though he writes them and sends photos of his mission work more often.

Busy with midday prayer, Sister Marie Michelle cannot be here to welcome Gakirage. The nuns' days are regulated by a system of loud buzzers directing them from prayer to prayer; each day they spend all but two waking hours chanting, singing, reading, working silently, or in silent conversation with God.

Late in the afternoon, though, the curtains part again to reveal all 10 sisters – Gakirage's spiritual family – peering through the bars at the tall Rwandan.

"Mi hermano" (my brother), Sister Marie Michelle says.

She and Gakirage have waited a decade for this meeting. Neither thought it would happen this side of the grave, though both believed they would find each other eventually.

"I thought I'd have to wait for heaven to see him," she says, flushing.

A parable lived

Through the altar window the nuns appear buffeted by winds, dark habits whipping in a whir of ceiling fans.

On the other side of the altar, in striking green robes, Gakirage reads the morning's New Testament lesson from Luke: Jesus instructing a lawyer to love his neighbor as himself.

"And who is my neighbor?" The lawyer challenges.

"The one who showed him kindness," the orphan priest tells his sisters.

Marie Michelle beams through the window. When a young woman, she nearly joined a missionary order working in Africa and South America herself; she's always wished one of her five brothers would become a priest. Becoming Gakirage's spiritual sister, she's fulfilled both dreams.

Her letters, meanwhile, have been a vital connection for Gakirage during the 10 years he's spent visiting remote Amazon villages. This month, he'll head to the Vatican for a new appointment to a team doing pastoral work with displaced people; he and Sister Marie Michelle intend to keep writing.

Through it all, the pair agree, their most important connection has been, and will be, through praying for one another.

"The union in prayer is the deepest thing," she says, "better than letters and pictures."

"Six thousand miles away, it is a communion of the spirit," he agrees. "I don't need to tell her, 'Sister, I love you,' because I tell it to Jesus and it is transmitted."

To love your neighbor as yourself is one of God's requirements, the lawyer acknowledges to Jesus. "That is the right answer," Jesus replies. "Do that and you will live."

I'm still alive

The others have scattered at the blare of the dinner bell; only Sister Marie Michelle stays to talk with Gakirage. A window in the wall of bars hangs open.

The pair are giddy: chatting, laughing, posing for photographs, showing off the stacks of Gakirage's letters she's collected over the years.

Suddenly Sister Marie Michelle says, a little stiffly, "The grate is open. This is an opportunity for me to give you a hug."

They embrace warmly. "Mi hermano," she says. "You are my sister," he replies – and she hurries off to help with dinner.

It is impossible, Gakirage reflects, to explain the weight of such a moment. He last received a hug like this from his mother, from his sisters before their deaths. As a priest, he never expected to feel familial love again.

"It's like seeing, 'My God, I'm still in this world,' " he says. "This is like looking with the ears, with the eyes, and saying, 'I'm still alive.' I couldn't have imagined it."

Sister Marie Michelle dashes back into the room to close the curtains over the grate, now shut.

"This is my sister," Gakirage says incredulously as she runs off again. "I'm happy to ..." and he trails off, noticing a gap in the curtains, which he hurries to close.

Mary Wiltenburg is a staff writer for The Christian Science Monitor, *where this story first appeared.*

Norman Podhoretz

...continued from p.7

Podhoretz draws an analogy between our current situation and the so-called Truman doctrine, spelled out in the famous 1947 essay of George F. Kennan. This amounted to a policy of containment and maintaining a vigilant counterforce to Russian imperialism, a policy in which the impressive American military force played a key role.

Enter President Bush, who after 9/11 decisively broke with the prevailing Clinton policy of merely maintaining the status quo. According to Podhoretz, he converted to become "a passionate democratic idealist of the Reaganite stamp."

Beginning on September 20, 2001, President Bush in a series of major speeches spelled out his determination not simply to fight a defensive war, but to pursue the "heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century" in their home bases and to destroy them.

Four Pillars

President Bush has insisted that we should not only eliminate tyrants but also assist liberated people to build free and democratic societies. And with that ambitious goal, he has unleashed a firestorm of objections. It can't be done, the critics say; it is a form of imperialism and arrogance, say others. It is a preposterous attempt to make over the world in the image America. And more of the same, often laced with a degree of venom and anger that goes far beyond the bounds of fairness and civility.

What has especially angered President Bush's critics is his reliance on the distinction between good and evil. They argue that such language has no place in our political vocabulary, for it suggests that there is a right and wrong way of ordering our societies. Such a concept is offensive to ardent liberals who have embraced the now fashionable notions of multiculturalism, which really is a form of moral relativism. That's why they are offended by the President's reference to the "axis of evil," meaning Iran, Iraq and North Korea. The level of vituperation directed at President Bush by what Podhoretz calls "advanced" thinkers and "sophisticated" commentators and diplomats reached new heights, or rather lows.

This rejection of moral relativism, which so angered his critics, is what Podhoretz calls the first of four pillars of the Bush doctrine.

The second pillar is no less offensive to Bush's critics, for it too defies what now has become accepted wisdom as defined in "standard academic and intellectual discourse." It is the notion that terrorism has its origin in economic circumstances, that is, poverty and general wretchedness. The Bush doctrine holds that terrorism is bred in the "swamps" of ideology and political oppression. Therefore what must be done is drain those swamps by defeating tyrants and then helping liberated people to build a free society.

The third pillar mentioned by Podhoretz is the notion of preemptive strikes. This concept is fundamentally different from the conduct of traditional warfare, which invariably involved two or more nations, that is, well-defined entities. Even during the Cold War, which was a contest between the democratic and the Communist blocs, we could and did rely on the notions of deterrence and containment. This was possible because we confronted an adversary that could still be relied on to value self-preservation and survival.

But such is not the case with people who use terror in disregard for their own lives and the lives of innocent citizens. Further, the stakes have been driven even higher where adversaries will not hesitate to use weapons of mass destruction. In a real sense, it is a matter of the highest urgency to ensure that such weapons do not fall into the hands of what President Bush has described as "unbalanced dictators" who would if they could use weapons of mass destruction or pass them on to their terrorist allies.

The fourth pillar, again squarely at odds with those who think of themselves as progressives, is the determination to be pro-active in the spreading of freedom and democracy. President Bush demonstrated that when he announced his support for the establishment of a Palestinian state by adding one crucial condition: Palestinian authorities must eliminate all terrorists from their midst and destroy their infrastructure.

This message has implication far beyond Yasser Arafat and his murderous regime. It is also intended for the entire Arab world where one-party rule and corruption is the order of the day.

President John F. Kennedy had famously declared in his inaugural address: "Let every nation know… that we shall pay any price, bear any burden … in order to assure the survival and the success of Liberty." The Vietnam War and its disastrous aftermath told a very different story of defeatism, lawlessness, and deep fault lines that have created ugly scars in the American landscape.

Lifting the Fog

Podhoretz provides a succinct overview of the tumultuous 1960s, the Nixon years, the Reagan "revolution, and the looming troubles emanating from Islamist zealots who declared war on the entire West, but especially on the United States. At first it seemed that 9/11 would create a new consensus, but that was soon blown away as the radical Left caught its breath, and astonishingly began to blame America itself for the murderous attacks.

This essay takes us through all the controversies that have so bitterly divided the American people, turned most of Europe and many in Canada into despisers of the Americans, caused the "Arab street" to celebrate 9/11, and now motivates thousands of insurgents in Iraq to kill those who have come to liberate that nation.

Podhoretz thinks that in the long run it will be possible to overcome the obstacles to a benevolent transformation in the Middle East, but he worries that America may not have the skills and the stomach to do what needs to be done. He writes:

"I confess that I am prey to anxieties about our capabilities, and to others stemming from our character as a nation. And in thinking about our long record of inattention and passivity toward terrorism before 9/11, I fear a relapse into appeasement, diplomatic evasion, and ineffectual damage control."

Podhoretz' essay is a carefully crafted masterpiece about America's role in the world wars of the past 90 years and now World War IV. As such, it is extremely useful in lifting the fog of the culture war now raging in the U.S. itself and in the other democracies. I fear that this internal "war" may be more of a threat to the free West than that emanating from the Islamist terrorists.

That's why this essay is must reading for all who are looking for honest debate and reflection on a conflict, that for good or ill, will have a lasting impact on generations to come.

After the Buzzer

Tim Antonides

Watching the Mighty Fall

Having just got back from a summer of English teaching in Lithuania, my wife Monica and I were back in BC flipping through coverage of the Olympics looking for something interesting. On one channel, China was playing Hong Kong in men's doubles ping-pong. On another, there was a women's synchronized swimming quarter-final. And just when we thought things couldn't get better, they did. Lithuania was playing the U.S. in men's basketball.

As I mentioned last time, Lithuania is a real powerhouse in the basketball world. We knew this was going to be a good game. What surprised us, though, is how worked up we got about the match-up.

I was on my feet for most of the fourth quarter and spent a lot of time pacing and yelling at the TV. At the end of the game, when Lithuania recovered a rebound and held on to win the game, I just about had an aneurysm. Monica was equally pleased.

I don't want to over-analyze things, but what made us so desperate about wanting a little team from Eastern Europe to beat our friends to the south?

There were several. Of course, having just returned from Lithuania, we knew how small the country was and what it would mean for them to beat a giant like the U.S. As well, we could see the cockiness on the faces of the high-priced NBA stars from the U.S. as they strutted around the court. I have to admit also that my disdain for the current American government and its foreign policies might have crept in a little bit.

I guess the biggest factor at work was something that is pretty much universal: the desire to see the powerful fall from greatness. I'm sure that if you plug your nose and pick up one of those supermarket tabloids, you'll find pages of stories about celebrities and their shortcomings. People love to hear about the failures of successful people. Whether it's Michael Jackson going to court for allegations of paedophilia or Martha Stewart getting locked up for fraud, it brings great joy to many people to hear the details of how the mighty have fallen.

The slightest hint of scandal and our ears perk up. Maybe the big hero isn't a hero after all. Perhaps the great ones are actually slimeballs. Many live in that hope.

There is jealousy there. And ingratitude. Maybe even a pinch of self-righteousness. I think there is also a pervasive sense of insignificance in day-to-day living. When people don't know who they are and have given up on doing anything significant or having any kind of cultural currency, they are bound to resort to celebrating the demise of those who are significant.

It's hard to miss the pointlessness of this. But I suppose it's inevitable. A culture without God looks for any opportunity to glorify the individual but also to celebrate the depravity in others. An endless cycle of finding our heroes and gods and then rejoicing when they fall short. It seems to take an extra measure of discipline to resist the gossip and mockery that comes with the failures of well-known people.

When Christ walked on this earth, he chose to show love for the powerful and successful. He warned them against pride and the danger of success, but he didn't celebrate when they failed. Neither does he celebrate our inadequacies. He just loves.

Thank God.

Tim Antonides is back to teaching in Surrey, B.C. after spending a summer in Lithuania.

And then there's Pastor Jerry's idea of pastoral excellence . . .

For a different view, visit www.crcna.org/pastoralexcellence

SUSTAINING Pastoral EXCELLENCE

Made possible in the Christian Reformed Church through a grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.

Who, then, is an excellent pastor?

Andrew Kuyvenhoven.

The Christian Reformed Church now has a $2 million program called "Sustaining Pastoral Excellence." Notice that it says "sustaining" pastoral excellence and not "producing" such excellence. Thereby we give the benefit of the doubt to pastors now serving the church and we don't claim more than we can deliver.

The program is funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. The money is being used to: (1) improve the mentoring program that our church has had for more than twenty years, (2) support "peer groups" of pastors and other church workers for mutual discipline and encouragement, (3) sponsor continuing education events for pastors, and (4) publish materials that may improve the efforts of pastors and congregations and the health of the whole church.

I am deeply skeptical that another program can produce or sustain excellence in this divine business of caring for God's own people. And I don't feel that I myself was an "excellent" pastor. But I (and most other pastors) *can* say, "By God's grace I persevered." That's why the title of the little book recently published by the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence folks was well chosen: *Persevering in Ministry.* It's an easy read for anyone who loves God's church, because it consists of true confessions by ten seasoned pastors.

In that spirit of confession and learning, I hope the following is a modest contribution to the goal of pastoral excellence.

Early Selection

If we wish to strengthen the pastoral ministry we must be more selective at the beginning. Persons who are unfit for the job cause an enormous amount of pain and sleepless nights to their church council members, they ruin a congregation and when they manage to get a call to another church they will wreck that one too. Misfits become "serial killers," as one of my colleagues said.

Early screening is even more critical than it used to be, because today church members are less tolerant of pastoral misfits. They simply leave for greener pastures. And forty years ago all candidate pastors came from "Our School." Today we receive them through many avenues. Therefore the decisive examination is very critical.

Just as the weeding out of obvious misfits should be done early, so the encouragement of talented young people should take place before they have made crucial choices. If our parents, pastors and teachers were absolutely convinced (as I am) that there is no better and nobler calling than being a minister of the Gospel, we might produce a few less excellent business administrators but a few more good pastors.

On-the-job training

The mentoring program for the first few years of ministry is improving, I have heard. And about 200 pastors are already involved in peer learning groups, I have read.

In addition, a pastor should have refreshment and enrichment courses from time to time. They should not always be courses the pastor prefers but possibly some training he or she needs. And when the church council allows time and money for such periods of training, there should also be a system of accountability. The council or its trustee should know beforehand what the pastor is going to do and afterwards what was accomplished.

Disciplined by listening to others

However, all training and support does not benefit a pastor unless his or her personal attitude towards God and the congregation is right! That means, first, that the pastor must live a holy (yes!) and disciplined life.

I have enormous admiration for single people who live a joyful, disciplined, Christian life. I don't know how they do it. For me the nearness of my spouse is necessary to keep me on the rails. She was my best corrective and stimulant, mostly unintentionally, I'm sure. She kept me honest when I got carried away. And if I could not get my point across to her, I knew it would not work for the congregation. Besides, married persons also strive to gain and keep the respect of each other. And women as well as men are kept from many sins, including sloth, if they live their lives before the ever seeing eyes of spouse and children.

A revered rabbi was dying and his disciples gathered around his bed, begging him for a final word of divine wisdom. With laboring breath their spiritual father finally said to his children: "Live always as if the neighbors are seeing you." The rabbi's disciples were very disappointed because the saying was not profound enough.

Indeed, it does sound too mundane for a Christian who lives before the face of God, *Coram Deo,* every day and night. We should not need the neighbor's eyes to keep us on the straight and narrow. True enough. But I am merely saying that it helps to have someone next to you who knows what time you get up and what you do all day. I have also worked fifteen years in an office environment (CRC Publications) where you are accountable to each other. In a trusting and open atmosphere, good work is produced.

Theoretically it should be possible to be a loner. Most of us know stories about desert saints and pillar saints and godly hermits. But pastors should not live that way – although everyone must have a place to be alone. My point is that if you don't mix with people who critique you, praise you, and pray for you, you're heading for trouble.

Called and equipped

I knew that I was called by God through his church; and that the Holy Spirit was in me so that I could fulfill my calling.

The burden of that call was sometimes light and sometimes heavy. For example, sick-visiting (a duty spelled out in the Call-Letter) was not very attractive to me. When I was in my thirties and had never been ill, I thought that Christians on their sickbeds would be saints at the portals of God. In fact, they could be ornery, and even when they were happy to see me, they would talk about dysfunctional organs and medical procedures, topics that did not interest me or made me a little queasy.

During my first years of ministry I did sick-visiting out of a sense of duty. But I did it. And God always rewards obedience.

We cannot be excellent in all we have to do, but we can be faithful. And if we serve faithfully, eventually we find joy as the bonus.

Today we talk more about gifts than about calling and duty, I think.

I found that I was called to many things for which I had no gifts.

See **Excellent pastor** *on p.* 19

News vignettes

Stemcells, monkeys and work

H. Der Nederlanden

The advocates of stemcell research have waxed eloquent in the media and even at the US Democratic convention about all the cures awaiting us once access to stemcells from fetuses is no longer taboo. Here's one "cure"they never foresaw: a cure for laziness and a revival of the Protestant work ethic. After injecting monkeys with DNA – that's the genetic stuff derived from stemcells – they began to work harder at tasks they had previously been trained to do. Apparently the gene therapy blocked the monkeys' ability to figure out that they had already done enough to earn their reward.

In short, they didn't know how long it was till payday and they just went on working obsessively. They did so with greater diligence and accuracy than before. A few years ago Charles Colson wrote a small book that asked why Americans were no longer working like they had in the good old days. He suggested it was because they were straying from the morality of their forefathers. This raises doubts about that thesis. Maybe there was something wrong with the Protestant gene pool.

A warning to employees: better put a padlock on the coffee machines at work. Sure as shooting employers will find a way to inject that DNA into the coffee. After a couple of coffee breaks with genetically modified coffee, you will never want another one, and you'll go one working whether you get a paycheck or not.

The story says that the monkeys became workaholics. If that isn't a crime against nature! Watching the monkeys at the zoo is always so entertaining because they seem to do nothing but play.

The research comes in the nick of time. A French writer, Corinne Maier, has written a best-seller sure to be translated into English extolling sloth in the workplace. Employers are hoping that the people who buy the book will be too lazy to read it.

Europeans, who have been enjoying a 35-hour work week, are being urged by both government and employers to return to a 40 hour week to compete with us doughty, energetic North Americans. Many of us put in even more than 40 hours per week (some because they're playing solitaire on their computers)

Maier champions loafing as a way to subvert the almighty corporation. (In France and many other European countries firing a worker for sloth has become almost impossible.) I wonder whether this is just another way for the French to display their superiority to us colonials on this side of the Atlantic. Whereas here people are unproductive due to incompetence; in France they are unproductive on principle.

The French tend to be very liberal on most issues; methinks, however, that they will put up strong resistance to gene therapy if it makes them work like monkeys – and Americans.

Art: fakes, copies and the aura of originals

An art exhibit in Finland featuring the work of the Spanish surrealist painter Salvador Dali was discovered to consist largely of fakes and forgeries. The organizers claimed they had no idea. Apparently the trick was exposed by art collectors who owned the originals and who wondered how their paintings could be on display in Finland. No doubt, there were some anxious moments here and there among the elite.

Hundreds of people paid to see the forgeries. When they admired them, oohing and aahing as they gazed upon the masterpieces, they were not aware they were being enthralled by fakes. I wonder: did the subsequent discovery detract from that earlier experience of awe? It's a little like admiring a beautiful woman only to learn afterward that "she" was really a "he" – somewhat unsettling. But some argue that the fundamental value of art is to unsettle or defamiliarize us – the surrealists among them. If that's true, maybe the phony paintings did that even better than the originals. Salvador Dali was always trying to freak us out.

For years the walls of our house were graced by copies of Van Gogh, Manet and Van Ruisdael till the sun gradually leached out their colors. We got the Masterpieces of Western Art free with a buggyful of groceries and a coupon at Thrifty Acres when I was a student eager to put my refined tastes on display. The fact that they were copies never dampened my appreciation in the slightest. Unlike the owners of the originals, I didn't need to worry about security, climate and upkeep. Owning original masterpieces isn't a joy but a burden. Somewhere the thieves who swiped the overly famous painting "The Scream" are sitting in the dark biting their fingernails, jumping at every footfall, trying desperately to figure out how to make their daring art theft pay off.

There are probably a dozen forgers out there who, given a few days, could knock off a reasonably good copy of that painting that would fool 99.5 percent of us. But, no, we want to stand in the awesome presence of the original, the authentic work daubed upon by the master, not before some fake or copy. It is only the original that gives off that mystical aura or force-field that confers status on the viewer or owner. That's why they cost so much.

The grocery-store copies that we hung on our livingroom wall in their plastic frames conferred no status on us whatsoever, I found to my disillusionment. An art student who visited us and who knew about such things said they were "tacky" – even though they were printed on paper embossed with brush strokes to give them an authentic texture. Yes, the artworld values "authenticity" very highly, even when the experts have a hard time telling the original from the forgery.

That has always puzzled me. In music the original is reproduced all over the place, and people gladly pay to sit and soak up this secondary aura – just as I used to sit back in my imitation leather easy chair to bask in the glow of Van Gogh's "Sunflowers" by way of my grocery-store copy. I figure copy-shmoppy: I'm a bit of a copy myself. I can only hope that I glow a little as well.

Dodging the grim reaper

According to a study of attitudes and their effect on aging, those who reject the stereotypes of aging live longer than those who accept them. The poll questioned people over 50. They were asked to agree or disagree that aging meant that you lose your pep, become less useful, less happy and generally deteriorate.

Those who disagree with the stereotype (or the reality) lived 7.5 years longer than those who agreed. This means, according to the report, that attitude means a lot. More even than to quit smoking. More even than going to church.

I wonder, though: might it just mean that some of those questioned weren't in very good shape and sensed that old age was not going to treat them well? Maybe they were just aware of their own fragility.

Another study shows that for men being a bachelor is more dangerous than smoking. Being married, men, reduces your risk of dying by 9 percent (that is, if you don't keep loaded guns lying around the house). Of course, it may be that some men have such a bad attitude that no woman wants to marry them. This leads to a worsening of attitude, which leads to smoking and bad breath and worsens their chances of getting a wife, and .... Well, you get the picture. Who knows what shortens your life?

People used to believe that it was God who set the term of your life. Now it's diet and statisticians. And labeling.

Towards more accurate labeling

Health Canada wants more detailed and more graphic labels on cigarette packages. It has found (no doubt from a well-funded study) that few people can recite all the harmful chemicals named on the package label. Can you? I couldn't. Here they are: tar, nicotine, carbon monoxide, formaldehyde, hydrogen cyanide and benzene.

The folks at Health Canada are trying to figure a way to include in each package a graphic description of all the diseases caused by these ingredients. However, they are concerned lest non-readers may not be getting the message. So the document will have to include illustrations: full- color pictures, perhaps, of lung and lip cancer, tuberous growths, emaciated bodies, rows of people in hospital beds hooked up to tubes and machines – a pictorial gallery of human misery. Why not an excerpt from Dante's Inferno? Scaring people straight may be taboo in pastoral circles, but not for Health Canada.

It is, we all know, just a matter of providing people with information. When we humans know the truth, we, of course, live by it.

I wonder how this idea would go over if it were applied to cars? Can't you see a Mercedes coming off the production line emblazoned with huge labels warning against its emissions and the dangers of driving? SUVs, of course, would be embossed with a huge skull and crossbones and my van with pictures of bloodied children.

How would you apply the principle to fast-food places or to bars? A Ronald McDonald who is grossly obese and in the throes of a heart attack?

Opinion

Mainly on Money

Consumer debt, interest rates and hungry China

The American economy is dangerously on edge thanks to its loyal citizens. Low interest and earlier tax rebates have so far kept Americans on an even keel, but now there is a more than even chance that their happy-go-lucky attitude will change to an unhappy-unlucky mood. And that is bad news for all of us.

Whenever I go out for lunch in Canada – which doesn't happen all that much – my fellow lunchers are mostly older people. They have the time and the money, thanks to generous pension benefits courtesy the Canadian tax payer. In the USA it is somewhat different: there such a large mix of all ages eat out, that it makes me wonder whether any ever eat a meal at home or even know how to prepare a meal from scratch. Suffice it to say that eating out is very costly, and often not very healthy: the fatter, the tastier, so obesity gains.

Judging by growing credit card debt, these same people charge their meals and end up paying 20 percent interest on the bill. I am old fashioned and don't believe in debt, unlike our southerly neighbors where household debt climbed at twice the pace of household income from the beginning of 2000 through 2003. In those four years Americans took on $2.3 trillion in new mortgages – increasing it to nearly $7 trillion, while consumer credit, from zero-interest auto loans to the much more expensive debt on credit cards, climbed 33 percent, rising to $2 trillion in 2003 from $1.5 trillion in 2000. This gives every one of the 270 million Americans, from new-born babe to Bill Gates on average a personal debt of $35,000. Fortunately, thanks to historically low interest rates, their monthly debt payments are smaller and for most people that's all that matters. The favorable condition of the last few years gave Americans lots of money to spend – be it borrowed – and lower payments, so they had the cake and ate it too, complete with icing.

However. There is a nasty twist to all this. Lending rates aren't fixed. My first – and only – mortgage had the same interest for 25 years, so I knew where I stood. That was in the early 1960's when life and employment were predictable. Not anymore. Stability is out of the window. We live in a new era where the only predictable thing is change, including the weather apparently.

Interdependency

This new state of affairs has also affected our supply of goods. More about that later. Out of the blue too many people in our global market place are after a limited supply of everything. One of the basic laws of economics is that when demand is greater than supply, prices jump. We now see this with the raw materials upon which our lives are based: oil, steel, wheat, soya, corn, the building blocks of our existence all have gone up in price, and with it will our cost of living, soon to be followed by higher interest rates.

Canada may be politically independent, but economically we are not: whatever happens in the USA will spill over into our fair land.

Personal debt isn't the only liability there. Americans love to buy stuff. It's their national religion. Not only are these items bought on credit, many of them are imported from either Europe or Asia.

How things have changed! About 10 years ago the United States had a trade surplus of almost $9 billion with the European Union, and a small deficit of $18.3 billion with China. Last year the trade deficit with Europe was $99.8 billion and $138.7 billion with China, while the total of imports over exports exceeded $500 billion, and growing. It topped more than $55 billion (US of course) last month alone. Europe supplied them with machine tools, BMWs and Mercedes-Benzes, and China shipped boatloads of manufactured goods, and so kept Wal-Mart in business. And the dollar stores, of course.

What will throw the economy out of whack this time? The unexpected huge jump in oil prices, most of it imported as well, will be the proverbial last straw that breaks the camel's back.

So far these deficits, including their budget gaps, have been financed by China and Japan, shortfalls now amounting to a trillion dollars per year. These enormous sums are making those lenders quite nervous. So they are selling their American bonds in droves and buying gold or Swiss Francs and even Canadian dollars. The result is that the American dollar is going down, while other currencies are gaining in value.

The Americans, not surprisingly, hate to see their dollar depreciate too much too fast, so, in order to make it more attractive for these Asian countries to hang on to their investments, Washington – read Greenspan and the Federal Reserve – will be forced to increase interest rates.

And here I come back to our happily eating out and highly indebted American neighbors. Higher interest means higher monthly payments, which will force them to spend less money elsewhere, which is good for the trade deficit but bad for many, as it will slow the already sluggish economy even more, throw millions of people out of work and cause even more bankruptcies and mortgage foreclosures.

Of course, neither Kerry nor Bush will even hint at this on their campaigns: far too dangerous. Once in office, the first thing they do is the unpopular. Ask Dalton McGuinty, Ontario's Premier, who has become McGuilty in breaking a lot of campaign promises, including not to increase taxes.

Living off the land

What will happen to food costs? Do we have to start foraging the wild? That's what our only in Canada residing grandson did a few weeks ago. We have a total of 11 grandchildren of which 8 live in the USA. He came, accompanied by his father with a specific purpose in mind.

This strapping young lad is a dedicated outdoor's man, and since our property has a back yard of thousands of crown-owned acres including small lakes, wetlands, rocks and trees, he wanted to practise his skills in surviving in the wilderness and 'live off the land.'

So he and his dad set out, equipped with bow and arrow, sleeping bag, matches and hatchet, water, but no food, to become 'hunter-gatherers' for a 28-hour period, leaving at 1 p.m. and planning to return at 5 p.m. the next day. They did come back an hour early and hungry. They had, indeed, lived off the land. Our grandson, with his arrows had shot a few large bullfrogs, which they ate for supper and breakfast. They also had gathered handfuls of blackberries, growing in abundance in a clear patch in the forest.

We had a large meal ready for them, homegrown potatoes and green beans, cucumber and tomatoes, even a dark beer – bought, not home-brewn – for our son-in-law, who left to lead a three-day computer conference, while our grandson stayed to earn some money, helping me for three days with heavy cement slabs and some brick work. Relying on the land for food is an ancient practice. That's how thousands of years ago people lived, choosing and picking what was growing, hunting and fishing what was available, sometimes feasting, often starving. Of course, then – whenever that was – the earth had only a few million people, with intimate knowledge of nature's free food supplies.

Our grandson has some of that insight, unique for an almost 16-year-old. Whenever he is in a bookstore, he always noses around in the 'nature' section and buys books such as the Special Air Services (SAS) manual teaching its members how to live without regular meals from mother. He showed it to me before they set out.

All this makes me wonder. Is he sensing something that we miss? Are there vibes vibrating out there that we, grown-ups, don't notice? I know there are a lot of unknowns in the universe. Do stars really influence our lives? His excursion made me think about the direction our world is taking. Lester Brown, president of Earth Policy Institute in Washington and an expert on China, sees that country as the weathervane for the entire world. If China can survive as a nation in the next decades, then we will have a good chance to do so as well.

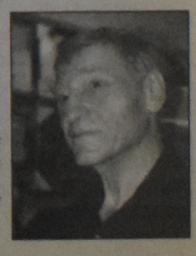
Picture the map of the USA. The Mississipi River runs roughly North - South and has about 40 percent of America's landmass east of its shorelines, with perhaps 200 million people. China has in that same space about 1 billion bodies. No wonder that with such great density water tables are falling, rivers drying, and contaminated water sources taking their toll on the productivity of China's fields. Also, of the 16 most polluted cities in the world, China is 14. No surprise then that the general level of health is falling, made worse by the government surrendering medical care to private enterprise, which the majority of the people cannot afford. Not only is farmland being absorbed rapidly by the expansion of cities and industrial parks, but with peasants working out, their land is more neglected and exploited.

So when I noticed a short paragraph in the *Globe and Mail* that China was rapidly increasing its food imports, I started to wonder how this would affect us. It's quite likely that a year or two from now, China might be importing as much as 50 million tons of wheat, soya and rice, more than any other country in the world. Makes sense. With 20 percent of the world's population, it has only 7 percent of its arable land.

China's leadership – all old men – remember well the famines of the 1950s, when an estimated 40 million people starved to death as a result of the government-ordered initiative to industrialize, known as the Great Leap Forward. This mass die-off set the stage for China to become the manufacturing hub of the world, and made stores such as Wal-Mart possible.

Thanks to massive exports, China has lots of money: it has some $500 billion in the piggybank and can afford to outbid any country in the world to prevent food shortages from happening again. Fact is that since 1998's record harvest of 512 million tons, grain production has fallen every year to now just over 400 million, depleting its reserves, while its appetite is jumping. The 9% annual growth of the economy is pushing up wages and pushing out waistlines. City people are more likely to eat meat – which is fattened on grain – and they are more likely to be fat. Already soya bean imports have doubled last year to 20 million tons and are expected to double again this year. The price of rice too – the traditional staple – has surged globally, while grain futures are up 30% this year thanks largely to the China factor. So, perhaps as early as next year, China's cereal needs may cause food shortages to appear and with it rising inflation and interest rates.

Could it be that our grandson has the right idea after all?



Bert Hielema lives in Tweed, Ontario. His website has been updated, now including all past columns as well as other writings: www.geocities.com/hielemab

Classifieds

Excellent pastor

...continued from p. 17

But when God calls, he also equips us. Once you are sure that God has called and that he has assigned this task to you, you may not wiggle out of it. His Spirit will do it through you.

First Things First

Share the load – I did many things wrong. For years I was in a large church, mostly new immigrants, with many unsettled and straying members. I was hardly home for an evening during those years. I thought I had to do it all and that nobody else should or could do it. Now I think I should have listened to the minister who said, "You should work with the good ones."

At that time I thought he was in favor of staying with the ninety-nine who were safely in the fold and I was following the Master in going after the one pesky sheep. Actually he had a crude way of saying that I should be an "enabler," as it is called today. If you teach ten to teach, you bear fruit a hundredfold. If a dozen imitate your witness, your Master's voice is recorded all over town.

Give time to sermon preparation – But I did a few things right and why not mention two of those: I never allowed anything to interfere with my sermon preparations. Pastors today should not either. They should never use any excuse to neglect their main job. If all of us would preach a little better, the church would be much stronger. For, if you preach real well, God speaks.

I have found that God speaks in the sermon only after I have studied so well, that I know exactly what the message is. That comes first. And then you can be sure that the Spirit of God gets hold of you and your words. That's God's promise.

Respect the congregation – A second thing is: respect for your audience. This requires that you start on time and that you quit on time, because it is their time. I know that Paul once preached through the night but we aren't Paul.

Respect (and love!) for the assembled church members demands that you not "talk down" to them. After all, pastors are nothing without them. Pastors have no cause to underestimate their intelligence.

Seek the Kingdom – A big change is taking place in the church. All who hold a position of influence have a duty to deny their own hobbies and seek the kingdom. This is another big topic for which I lack space. God forbid that we waste our time with squabbles over what and how to sing.

Trust the Shepherd – No person or program will save us in the rapids of change and form us to be what we should be. What will save us is total trust in the Good Shepherd whom we try to emulate.

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Classifieds

Birthday

With praise and thanksgiving to God
for his great faithfulness,
the children, grandchildren
and great-grandchildren of

Bill Klyn-Hesselink

plan to celebrate
his **80th Birthday** with him.
There will be an opportunity to congratulate
him after the church service on Sunday,
September 12th at Owen Sound CRC,
Owen Sound, ON.

We thank God for Dad's care,
support and love to his family
and for his service in God's Kingdom.

John & Sheila Klyn-Hesselink, *Fonthill ON*
Bill & Carol Klyn-Hesselink, *Chatham ON*
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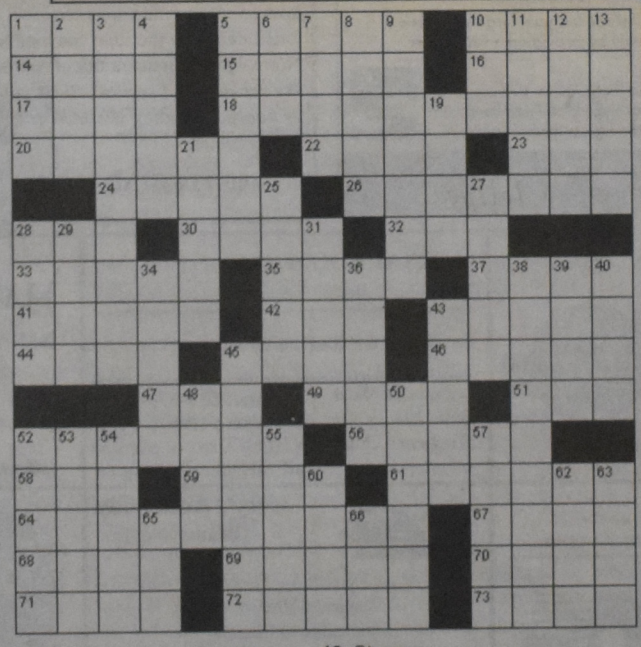
Crossword

Across

1. Notable time periods
5. Cooktop
10. Son of Benjamin, traveler with Jacob to Egypt, Gen 46:21
14. Bathroom powder
15. Hip bone
16. Fat prefix
17. Nick & Nora's pooch
18. GOD'S NATURE, Job 42:2; Jer 32:17; Matt 19:26; Luke 1:37; Rev 19:6
20. GOD'S NATURE, Acts 5:3,4
22. Babylonian month #12
23. Hydrocarbon ending
24. Fourth Jewish month
26. GOD'S NATURE, Ps 33:11; 90:1,2; I Tim 1:17
28. Hosp. ward
30. Son of Pahath-moab, Ezra 10:30, or a priest in the days of Joiakim, Neh 12:12-15
32. Garden tool
33. Cryptographer
35. GOD'S NATURE (HOW MANY), Is 44:6; 45:21; Deut 6:4; I Cor 8:4; I Tim 2:5; James 2:19
37. Where Moses took a cruise?
41. Uncaps
42. Neckwear
43. American Pacific territory
44. Stockbrokers's grp.
45. Hind
46. Ticklish dolls
47. Bullring shout
49. Juice man
51. Southwest native
52. ALL- ____, GOD'S NATURE, Ps 147:5
56. Leavening
58. "The Telltale Heart" author, init.
59. Shakespearean king
61. Parts of 48 down
64. GOD'S NATURE, Ps:139:7-13
67. Black
68. Prefix for legal or military
69. ____, meanie, minie, moe
70. Thomas ____ Edison
71. ____ dunk
72. Fumbles
73. Profound

Solution in September 27 issue.



Down

1. Greek letters
2. Rough wood file
3. Heights
4. Frighten
5. Ran amok
6. Deceased Houston Oiler Jeff
7. One of Columbus' trio
8. Show the way
9. Understanding of another's feelings
10. Spoil
11. Liquid fat
12. Traditional laxative
13. Stopover
19. Sandwich cookie
21. Supports, of a kind
25. Govt. bond
27. Kidney related
28. Cursor target
29. "____ Cabana"
31. Son of Shemidah, 1 Chron 7:19
34. Provide
36. Satchel Paige's first name
38. GOD'S NATURE, Mal 3:6; James 1:17; Ps 102:27
39. Ransack
40. Slacken
43. Bristles
45. Subscribed again
48. Easter flower
50. Homes on the range
52. Retains
53. Maritime
54. High-society musical
55. Zerubbabel traveled with this Nethinim family, Ezra 2:47
57. Place
60. Northern Nevada city
62. GOD'S NATURE, I John 4:8,16
63. Sugar ____ peas
65. Adult male sacrifice
66. Tear

Anniversary

1954 September 17 2004

With joy and thanksgiving to God we wish to announce the
50th Wedding Anniversary of our parents and grandparents

GERALD AND JANNY HEYINK (nee **Van Lochem**)

"Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the Lord his God." Psalm 146:5

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Bill Heyink († 1982)
Al & Sylvia Heyink – Scott, Gregory, Mitchell
Ray & Sandy Heyink – Curtis, Breanna, Chelsea

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Obituaries

MARTIN BOONSTRA

of Drayton
went home to be with his Lord
peacefully on
Monday, August 2, 2004
in his 88th year.

Beloved husband of Hennie Stevens
the late Freda Visscher
and the late Janet Boonstra

Loving father of:
Jack & Margaret Boonstra, *Ajax*
Martha & Herman Buitenhuis, *Rockwood*
Betty & Bill De haan, *New Hamburg*
Sally & Terry Irwin, *Inglewood*
Grace Rutledge, *Collingwood*
Peter & Ingrid Boonstra, *Peterborough*

Loved grandfather of 16
grandchildren and 20 great-
grandchildren.

He will be fondly remembered by the
Visscher and Stevens
children, grandchildren and
great-grandchildren as well as many
nieces and nephews.

Predeceased by one brother Pieter
Boonstra and one sister Grietje Tijsma.

Rev. Paul Drooger conducted
the Funeral Service in the
Drayton Christian Reformed Church
on Friday, August 6, 2004.
Correspondence: Hennie Stevens
Box 110
Drayton ON N0G 1P0

Peacefully at home, on Tuesday,
August 31, 2004

DIRK VOSKAMP

in his 73rd year.

Beloved husband of Elisabeth.

Loving father of
Renate and her husband Bert Nap,
Nancy and her husband Steve Bate,
Richard Voskamp and his wife Cindy.
Step-father of Margie, Nellie, Betty,
Darlene, Leo, and Grace.
Cherished Opa/Grandpa of
8 grandchildren, 21 step-
grandchildren and 7 step-great-
grandchildren.
Dear brother of John (Gerrie), Ina
(Jerry), Frank, (Cathy), Eric (Linda).

Friends were received at the
Dennis Toll Funeral Home, Brantford
and the service was in the chapel on
Saturday at 1 p.m. Interment at Mount
Pleasant Cemetery.
Donations to Hamilton Regional
Cancer Centre
appreciated.
www.dennistoll.ca

"For I am convinced
that neither death nor life,
neither angels nor demons,
neither the present nor the future,
nor any powers,
neither height nor depth,
nor anything else in all creation,
will be able to separate us
from the love of God
that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
Romans 8:38,39

Suddenly, on Monday, August 23, 2004

ANNE SNOEK (nee **Kruys**)

peacefully went to be with the Lord
after a brief battle with cancer.

Survived by her beloved husband
of 52 years: **Hans Snoek**

and by her children, grandchildren
and great-grandchildren:

Art & Nettie
Glen & Nicole
Rod & Rebecca (engaged)
Jackie & Mark Engelage
Arden
Ben & Julia
Katie
Wilma & George DeGroot
David Snoek-DeGroot
Matthew Snoek-DeGroot
Phillip DeGroot
Benjamin DeGroot
Joyce & George Hoekstra
Timothy
Angela
Ryan
Jeremy
Joel
Emily
Dorothy & Savath Norng
Shelly & Clarence Snyder
Brendan, Josephine
Kevin & Christina
Leah, Daniel
Wendy & Siemen Speelman
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Andrew
Rachel
Crystal
Stephen
Ian
Ellen & Tim Walton
James
Jim & Chris
John
Aaron
Brad
Graham
Rob & Pam
Victoria
Nathan
Wesley
Predeceased by her son
John Edward, 1983.

The funeral service was held at
Rehoboth CRC, Bowmanville
August 26, 2004
Rev. Harry Salomans officiating.

Correspondence may be sent to:
Hans Snoek,
PO Box 423
Orono ON L0B 1M0

"I lift up my eyes to the hills –
where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth...
The Lord will watch over your life...
your coming and going,
both now and forevermore."
Psalm 121

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"Lord, You have been our dwelling place throughout all generations" – Psalm 90:1

"This is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes"
Psalm 118: 23

Invitation

You are invited to the
25th Anniversary Celebration
of
Shalom Manor
at
Mountainview Christian Reformed Church
in Grimsby, on
Saturday, September 18, 2004 at 2 p.m.

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Events

CALVIN CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF DUNDAS-ONTARIO
will celebrate their 50th year as a congregation at 420 Highway 5 in Dundas, D.V.,
on Saturday, November 6, 2004 and Sunday November 7, 2004
All former members and friends are invited to come and celebrate with us. Festivities are being planned. Come join our celebration!
For more information please contact Anniversary Committee members:
Chairman: Fred VanderVelde Tel: 905-336-5619 Fax: 905-336-2376
Secretary: Brenda DeGroot Tel: 905-689-6350
E-mail: p-b.degroot@sympatico.ca
NOTE: We are currently looking for pictures and other memorabilia that we could use for publishing and/or displaying. Please mail to the church address: 420 Highway #5 W., P.O.Box 129, Millgrove, ON L0R 1V0

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sept 12 **Fryske Tsjerketsjinst**. Foargonger: Ds. J.D. Hellinga. Snein, de neimiddeis om trije ure Yn de Ancaster Reformeare Tsjerke **Ancaster**, Ont.

Sept 18 Sample the world of international development at the **CRWRC Global Bazaar**, Sat. 9 a.m. - 1p.m. at Faith CRC in **Burlington**. FREE Admission. For details, see ad page 21.

Sept 18 You are invited to the 25th Anniversary Celebration of Shalom Manor at Mountainview Christian Reformed Church in **Grimsby**, at 2 p.m

Sep 24 The **Ambassadors Concert** of favorites at 8 pm. in the First CRC, **Hamilton**. Reception following. Admission, $15 from an Ambassador or at the door. ♪

Oct 23 Worldwide Christian Schools fundraiser - Concert, **Liberation Choir** 8 pm. at Rehoboth United Reformed Church, 77 Glancaster Rd, **Hamilton**, ON. Please contact WCS to purchase tickets: (905) 387-0235 or canada@wwcs.org

Oct 28, 29 OCSTA 50th anniversary convention at Redeemer University College, **Ancaster,** and the Hamilton District Christian High School; inspirational address: Dr. Anthony Campolo; educational address: Prof. Hugh Cook. website: www.ocsta.org

Oct 30 **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Wallaceburg** CRC, 150 Bruinsma Ave. **Wallaceburg** (Free will offering) Info: (519) 637-4357

Nov. 5 **Christian Festival Concert**, Roy Thomson Hall, **Toronto**, 7:30 pm. Order tickets from Ontario Christian Music Assembly, Ph: 416-636-9779 or email: landmkooy@rogers.com

Nov 6 **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Maranatha** CRC, 2811 Highway #2 East **Bowmanville** (Free will offering) Info:(519) 637-4357

Nov. 6,7 **Calvin** CRC, **Dundas**, Ont. will celebrate their **50th year**. Come join our celebration! Festivities are being planned. For info: Fred VanderVelde at 905-336-5619 Fax: 905-336-2376 or Brenda DeGroot at 905-689-6350 or email: p-b.degroot@sympatico.ca

Nov 12 Concert, **Clinton** CRC 7:30 pm. A program of organ, piano, and vocal music by the Kruisselbrink Sisters from Tara, Ont. and the Men of Note. Info: 519-482-5372

Nov. 13 The Lighthouse Christian Community Centre annual **International Dinner and Silent Auction**. Help celebrate and support this inner-city ministry. New, better banquet facility: Columbus Hall, Lawrence and Dufferin, **Toronto**. Reservations required in advance: Lighthouse 416 535-6262 or email janet@lighthousecentre.ca

Nov 27 **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Bethel** CRC, 17 Robinson Road, off Hwy. #3 **Dunnville** (Freewill Offering) Info:(905) 387-0235

Dec 12 **Christmas Concert** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Knox** Presbyterian Church, 55 Hincks Street, **St. Thomas** (Free will offering) Info: (519) 637-4357

Dec 19 **Christmas Concert** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Knox** Presbyterian Church, 9 Victoria Street North, **Goderich**. Info: (519) 637-4357

The Hugh and Eve Meeter Calvinism Awards for High School Seniors

Awards are given annually for research papers on the topics selected by the Calvinism Committee. The 2005 topic:

Why Has Education Been So Central for John Calvin and Calvinism?

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For research paper guidelines and further information, request the Meeter Award Brochure* from The H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies, Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, Hekman Library, 1855 Knollcrest Circle SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546-4402 USA, tel. 616-526-7081.

Deadline for completed papers: January 15, 2005

** Brochures have also been sent to high schools associated with Christian Schools International.*

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Oct. 28 - Zillah, WA
Nov. 5 - Bradenton, FL
Nov. 6 - Lake Worth, FL
Nov. 9 - Prinsburg, MN
Nov. 19 - Pella, IA
Nov. 21 - Roselawn, IN

2005 Dates

Jan. 6 - Waupun, WI
Jan. 7 - Oostburg, WI
Jan. 8 - Chicago, IL
Jan. 14 - Lacombe, AB
Jan. 15 - Edmonton, AB
Jan. 28 - Washington, DC
Feb. 18 - Phoenix, AZ
Feb. 19 - Tucson, AZ
Mar. 11 - Escondido, CA
Mar. 12 - Ontario, CA
Mar. 12 - Minneapolis, MN
Mar. 13 - Bellflower, CA
Mar. 14 - Visalia, CA
Mar. 15 - Ripon, CA
Mar. 17 - Lynden WA
Mar. 18 - Abbotsford, BC
Mar. 20 - Tacoma, WA
April 8 - Manhattan, MT
April 8 - Platte, SD
April 21 - Lethbridge, AB
April 29 - Winnipeg, MB
April 30 - Emo, ON
May 7 - Holland, MI
May 8 - Grand Rapids, MI
May 9 - Burlington, ON
May 13 - Loveland, CO
May 14 - Denver, CO

more information is available at www.dordt.edu/events/jubilee

News

The King's University College Board of Governors Appoints Next President

EDMONTON, ALBERTA - The King's University College Board of Governors is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. J. Harry Fernhout, academic scholar, author and current President of the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, Ontario, as its third President. Dr. Fernhout will take office in July 2005, succeeding Dr. Henk Van Andel, who will be retiring after 20 years of dedicated service to the University College.

Dr. Fernhout holds a PhD in History and Philosophy of Education from the University of Toronto, an MA, also from the University of Toronto, an Mphil from the Institute for Christian Studies and a BA from Dordt College, Iowa.

Dr. Fernhout has held the position of President of the Institute for Christian Studies, an affiliated member of the Toronto School of Theology at the University of Toronto, since 1989. Previously, Dr. Fernhout served as Vice President Academic and Professor at the Institute. "I have been overwhelmed by the warmth and affirmation of the King's community," said Dr. Fernhout of his appointment, "and am thrilled to become a part of the University College at this exciting stage in its development."

Dr. Fernhout was selected after a 15-month international search. The search committee, comprised of Board of Governors, staff, faculty and student representatives, considered many individuals for this position of leadership. Harry Fernhout emerged as the committee's unanimous choice. His appointment was enthusiastically ratified by The King's University College Board of Governors, August 21, 2004. "Dr. Fernhout has a proven track record of academic accomplishments, administrative leadership, and the ability to confront new challenges facing Christian higher education," said Board Chair, Mr. John Kamphof. "He is a man of faith and vision, and we are certain he will lead The King's University College toward greater academic excellence, stronger institutional identity, and richer community service."

About The King's University College

A Christian undergraduate university founded in 1979, The King's University College offers fully-accredited, three- and four-year Bachelor degrees in the arts, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, commerce and theology, as well as a two-year Bachelor of Education after- degree. King's currently serves more than 650 students. Students come from Canada and abroad, representing 15 nations. Faculty are highly qualified, dedicated Christians committed to academic excellence and bringing a distinctly Christian perspective into the classroom.

For more information on The King's University College call (780) 465-3500, toll free 800-661-TKUC or online at www.kingsu.ca.

Redeemer University College Event

Redeemer University College
is pleased to announce the inauguration of

Dr. Craig G. Bartholomew

as the H. Evan Runner Professor of Philosophy
and Professor of Religion and Theology

You are warmly invited to attend
the ceremony on
Friday, October 1, 2004,
at 8:30 pm in the Auditorium.
Reception will follow.

The inaugural address is entitled:
For Such a Time as This:
the Relevance of the Neo-Calvinist Tradition Today

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